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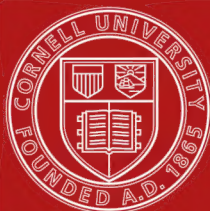
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*THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE*

By H. DE BALZAC

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SCENES FROM POLITICAL LIFE

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THE DEPUTY OF ARCIS







Adrien Moreau.

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THE WORKS  
OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY  
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME XV

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THE DEPUTY OF ARCIS  
AN HISTORICAL MYSTERY  
EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR

**Illustrated**

BY ADRIEN MOREAU AND M. ORANGE

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LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
BOSTON

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# CONTENTS.

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## Part First.

### THE ELECTION.

	PAGE
I. ALL ELECTIONS BEGIN WITH A BUSTLE . . .	1
II. REVOLT OF A LIBERAL ROTTEN BOROUGH .	11
III. OPPOSITION DEFINES ITSELF . . . . .	20
IV. THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY TEMPEST . .	32
V. THE PERPLEXITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ARCIS . . . . .	41
VI. THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814 FROM THE HOSIERY POINT OF VIEW . . . . .	52
VII. THE BEAUVISAGE FAMILY . . . . .	61
VIII. IN WHICH THE DOT, ONE OF THE HEROINES OF THIS HISTORY, APPEARS . . . . .	67
IX. A STRANGER . . . . .	77
X. THE REVELATIONS OF AN OPERA GLASS . .	91
XI. IN WHICH THE CANDIDATE BEGINS TO LOSE VOTES . . . . .	105
XII. THE SALON OF MADAME D'ESPAUD . . .	121
XIII. PREFACE BEFORE LETTERING . . . . .	137

## Part Second.

## LETTERS EXPLANATORY.

	PAGE
I. THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO MONSIEUR MARIE-GASTON . . . . .	143
II. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE DE CAMPS . . . . .	148
III. THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO M. MARIE- GASTON . . . . .	152
IV. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MME. OCTAVE DE CAMPS . . . . .	166
V. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	169
VI. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	177
VII. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	184
VIII. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	190
IX. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON . . . . .	194
X. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	207
XI. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MME. OCTAVE DE CAMPS . . . . .	223
XII. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON . . . . .	233
XIII. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	240
XIV. MARIE-GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE . . . . .	259
XV. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	270
XVI. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	277

*Contents.*

vii

	PAGE
XVII. SAME TO SAME . . . . .	286
XVIII. CHARLES DE SALLENAUVE TO THE COM- TESSE DE L'ESTORADE . . . . .	299
XIX. MARIE-GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE . . . . .	307

---

*Part Third.*

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.

I. THE SORROWS OF MONSIEUR DE TRAILLES .	309
II. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ELEVEN O'CLOCK AND MIDNIGHT . . . . .	321
III. A MINISTER'S MORNING . . . . .	330
IV. A CATECHISM . . . . .	337
V. CHILDREN . . . . .	352
VI. CURIOSITY THAT CAME WITHIN AN ACE OF BEING FATAL . . . . .	374
VII. THE WAY TO MANAGE POLITICAL INTRIGUES	406
VIII. SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES . . . . .	429
IX. IN THE CHAMBER . . . . .	455





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

*Designed by Adrien Moreau, and reproduced in photogravure by  
Goupil & Co., Paris.*

	PAGE
DORLANGE IN HIS STUDIO . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“Séverine found her father seated on a wooden bench at the end of his terrace” . . . . .	77
“‘The sight of the man who had given me life melted the ice within me’” . . . . .	242
“His Mistress gave him a look inquiring why he had disobeyed her orders” . . . . .	350



# THE DEPUTY OF ARCIS.

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## PART FIRST.

### THE ELECTION.

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#### I.

ALL ELECTIONS BEGIN WITH A BUSTLE.

BEFORE beginning to describe an election in the provinces, it is proper to state that the town of Arcis-sur-Aube was not the theatre of the events here related.

The arrondissement of Arcis votes at Bar-sur-Aube, which is forty miles from Arcis ; consequently there is no deputy from Arcis in the Chamber.

Discretion, required in a history of contemporaneous manners and morals, dictates this precautionary word. It is rather an ingenious contrivance to make the description of one town the frame for events which happened in another ; and several times already in the course of the Comedy of Human Life, this means has been employed in spite of its disadvantages, which consist chiefly in making the frame of as much importance as the canvas.

Toward the end of the month of April, 1839, about ten o'clock in the morning, the salon of Madame Marion, widow of a former receiver-general of the department of the Aube, presented a singular appearance. All the furniture had been removed except the curtains to the windows, the ornaments on the fireplace, the chandelier, and the tea-table. An Aubusson carpet, taken up two weeks before the usual time, obstructed the steps of the portico, and the floor had been violently rubbed and polished, though without increasing its usual brightness. All this was a species of domestic premonition concerning the result of the elections which were about to take place over the whole surface of France. Often things are as spiritually intelligent as men, — an argument in favor of the Occult Sciences.

The old man-servant of Colonel Giguët, Madame Marion's brother, had just finished dusting the room; the chamber-maid and the cook were carrying, with an alacrity that denoted an enthusiasm equal to their attachment, all the chairs of the house, and piling them up in the garden, where the trees were already unfolding their leaves, through which the cloudless blue of the sky was visible. The springlike atmosphere and sun of May allowed the glass door and the two windows of the oblong salon to be kept open.

An old lady, Madame Marion herself, now ordered the two maids to place the chairs at one end of the salon, four rows deep, leaving between the rows a space of about three feet. When this was done, each row presented a front of ten chairs, all of divers species. A line of chairs was also placed along the wall, under the windows and before the glass door.

At the other end of the salon, facing the forty chairs, Madame Marion placed three arm-chairs behind the tea-table, which was covered with a green cloth, on which she placed a bell.

Old Colonel Giguët arrived on this battle-field at the moment when his sister bethought herself of filling the empty spaces on either side of the fireplace with benches from the antechamber, disregarding the baldness of their velvet covers which had done good service for twenty-four years.

"We can seat seventy persons," she said to her brother triumphantly.

"God grant that we may have seventy friends!" replied the colonel.

"If, after receiving every night, for twenty-four years, the whole society of Arcis-sur-Aube, a single one of my regular visitors fails us on this occasion —" began the old lady, in a threatening manner.

"Pooh, pooh!" replied the colonel, interrupting his sister, "I'll name you ten who cannot and ought not to come. First," he said, beginning to count on his fingers, "Antonin Goulard, sub-prefect, for one; Frédéric Marest, *procureur-du-roi*, there's two; Monsieur Olivier Vinet, his substitute, three; Monsieur Martener, examining-judge, four; the justice of peace —"

"But I am not so silly," said the old lady, interrupting her brother in her turn, "as to expect office-holders to come to a meeting the object of which is to give another deputy to the Opposition. For all that, Antonin Goulard, Simon's comrade and schoolmate, would be very well pleased to see him a deputy because —"

"Come, sister, leave our own business of politics to us men. Where is Simon?"

"He is dressing," she answered. "He was wise not to breakfast, for he is very nervous. It is queer that, though he is in the habit of speaking in court, he dreads this meeting as if he were certain to meet enemies."

"Faith! I have often had to face masked batteries, and my soul — I won't say my body — never quailed; but if I had to stand there," said the old soldier, pointing to the tea-table, "and face forty bourgeois gaping at me, their eyes fixed on mine, and expecting sonorous and correct phrases, my shirt would be wringing wet before I could get out a word."

"And yet, my dear father," said Simon Giguët, entering from the smaller salon, "you really must make that effort for me; for if there is a man in the department of the Aube whose voice is all-powerful it is assuredly you. In 1815 —"

"In 1815," said the little old man, who was wonderfully well preserved, "I did not have to speak; I simply wrote out a little proclamation which brought us two thousand men in twenty-four hours. But it is a very different thing putting my name to a paper which is read by a department, and standing up before a meeting to make a speech. Napoleon himself failed there; at the 18th Brumaire he talked nothing but nonsense to the Five Hundred."

"But, my dear father," urged Simon, "it concerns my life, my fortune, my happiness. Fix your eyes on some one person and think you are talking to him, and you'll get through all right."

“Heavens!” cried Madame Marion, “I am only an old woman, but under such circumstances and knowing what depends on it, I — oh! I should be eloquent!”

“Too eloquent, perhaps,” said the colonel. “To go beyond the mark is not attaining it. But why make so much of all this?” he added, looking at his son. “It is only within the last two days you have taken up this candidacy of ideas; well, suppose you are not nominated, — so much the worse for Arcis, that’s all.”

These words were in keeping with the whole life of him who said them. Colonel Giguet was one of the most respected officers in the Grand Army, the foundation of his character being absolute integrity joined to extreme delicacy. Never did he put himself forward; favors, such as he received, sought him. For this reason he remained eleven years a mere captain of the artillery of the Guard, not receiving the rank of major until 1814. His almost fanatical attachment to Napoleon forbade his taking service under the Bourbons after the first abdication. In fact, his devotion in 1815 was such that he would have been banished with so many others if the Comte de Gondreville had not contrived to have his name effaced from the ordinance and put on the retired list with a pension, and the rank of colonel.

Madame Marion, *née* Giguet, had another brother who was colonel of gendarmerie at Troyes, whom she followed to that town at an earlier period. It was there that she married Monsieur Marion, receiver-general of the Aube, who also had had a brother, the chief-justice of an imperial court. While a mere barrister at Arcis this young man had lent his name during the Terror to

the famous Malin de l'Aube, the representative of the people, in order to hold possession of the estate of Gondreville. [See "An Historical Mystery."] Consequently, all the support and influence of Malin, now become count and senator, was at the service of the Marion family. The barrister's brother was made receiver-general of the department, at a period when, far from having forty applicants for one place, the government was fortunate in getting any one to accept such a slippery office.

Marion, the receiver-general, inherited the fortune of his brother the chief-justice, and Madame Marion that of her brother the colonel of gendarmerie. In 1814, the receiver-general met with reverses. He died when the Empire died; but his widow managed to gather fifteen thousand francs a year from the wreck of his accumulated fortunes. The colonel of gendarmerie had left his property to his sister on learning the marriage of his brother the artillery officer to the daughter of a rich banker of Hamburg. It is well known what a fancy all Europe had for the splendid troopers of Napoleon!

In 1814, Madame Marion, half-ruined, returned to Arcis, her native place, where she bought, on the Grande-Place, one of the finest houses in the town. Accustomed to receive much company at Troyes, where the receiver-general reigned supreme, she now opened her salon to the notabilities of the liberal party in Arcis. A woman accustomed to the advantages of salon royalty does not easily renounce them. Vanity is the most tenacious of all habits.

Bonapartist, and afterwards a liberal — for, by



strangest of metamorphoses, the soldiers of Napoleon became almost to a man enamoured of the constitutional system — Colonel Giguet was, during the Restoration, the natural president of the governing committee of Arcis, which consisted of the notary Grévin, his son-in-law Beauvisage, and Varlet junior, the chief physician of Arcis, brother-in-law of Grévin, and a few other liberals.

“If our dear boy is not nominated,” said Madame Marion, having first looked into the antechamber and garden to make sure that no one overheard her, “he cannot have Mademoiselle Beauvisage; his success in this election means a marriage with Cécile.”

“Cécile!” exclaimed the old man, opening his eyes very wide and looking at his sister in stupefaction.

“There is no one but you in the whole department who would forget the *dot* and the expectations of Mademoiselle Beauvisage,” said his sister.

“She is the richest heiress in the department of the Aube,” said Simon Giguet.

“But it seems to me,” said the old soldier, “that my son is not to be despised as a match; he is your heir, he already has something from his mother, and I expect to leave him something better than a dry name.”

“All that put together won’t make thirty thousand francs a year, and suitors are already coming forward who have as much as that, not counting their position,” returned Madame Marion.

“And?” asked the colonel.

“They have been refused.”

“Then what do the Beauvisage family want?” said the colonel, looking alternately at his son and sister.

It may seem extraordinary that Colonel Giguet, the brother of Madame Marion in whose house the society of Arcis had met for twenty-four years, and whose salon was the echo of all reports, all scandals, and all the gossip of the department of the Aube, — a good deal of it being there manufactured, — should be ignorant of facts of this nature. But his ignorance will seem natural when we mention that this noble relic of the Napoleonic legions went to bed at night and rose in the morning with the chickens, as all old persons should do if they wish to live out their lives. He was never present at the intimate conversations which went on in the salon. In the provinces there are two sorts of intimate conversation, — one, which is held officially when all the company are gathered together, playing at cards or conversing; the other, which *simmers*, like a well made soup, when three or four friends remain around the fireplace, friends who can be trusted to repeat nothing of what is said beyond their own limits.

For nine years, ever since the triumph of his political ideas, the colonel had lived almost entirely outside of social life. Rising with the sun, he devoted himself to horticulture; he adored flowers, and of all flowers he best loved roses. His hands were brown as those of a real gardener; he took care himself of his beds. Constantly in conference with his working gardener he mingled little, especially for the last two years, with the life of others; of whom, indeed, he saw little. He took but one meal with the family, namely, his dinner; for he rose too early to breakfast with his son and sister. To his efforts we owe the famous rose Giguet, known so well to all amateurs.

This old man, who had now passed into the state of a domestic fetich, was exhibited, as we may well suppose, on all extraordinary occasions. Certain families enjoy the benefit of a demi-god of this kind, and plume themselves upon him as they would upon a title.

"I have noticed," replied Madame Marion to her brother's question, "that ever since the revolution of July Madame Beauvisage has aspired to live in Paris. Obligated to stay here as long as her father lives, she has fastened her ambition on a future son-in-law, and my lady dreams now of the splendors and dignities of political life."

"Could you love Cécile?" said the colonel to his son.

"Yes, father."

"And does she like you?"

"I think so; but the thing is, to please the mother and grandfather. Though old Grévin himself wants to oppose my election, my success would determine Madame Beauvisage to accept me, because she expects to manage me as she pleases and to be minister under my name."

"That's a good joke!" cried Madame Marion.  
"What does she take us for?"

"Whom has she refused?" asked the colonel.

"Well, within the last three months, Antonin Goulard and the *procureur-du-roi*, Frédéric Marest, have received, so they say, equivocal answers which mean anything — *except yes*."

"Heavens!" cried the old man throwing up his arms. "What days we live in, to be sure! Why,

Lucie was the daughter of a hosier, and the granddaughter of a farmer. Does Madame Beauvisage want the Comte de Cinq-Cygne for a son-in-law?"

"Don't laugh at Madame Beauvisage, brother. Cécile is rich enough to choose a husband anywhere, even in the class to which the Cinq-Cygnés belong. But there's the bell announcing the electors, and I disappear — regretting much I can't hear what you are all going to say."

## II.

## REVOLT OF A LIBERAL ROTTEN-BOROUGH.

THOUGH 1839 is, politically speaking, very distant from 1847, we can still remember the elections produced by the Coalition, an ephemeral effort of the Chamber of Deputies to realize the threat of parliamentary government, — a threat *à la* Cromwell, which without a Cromwell could only end, under a prince “the enemy of fraud,” in the triumph of the present system, by which the Chambers and the ministers are like the wooden puppets which the proprietor of the Guignolet shows exhibits to the great satisfaction of wonder-stricken idlers in the streets.

The arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube then found itself in a singular position. It supposed itself free to choose its deputy. From 1816 to 1836 it had always elected one of the heaviest orators of the Left, belonging to the famous seventeen who were called “Great Citizens” by the liberal party, — namely, François Keller, of the house of Keller Bros., the son-in-law of the Comte de Gondreville. Gondreville, one of the most magnificent estates in France, is situated about a mile from Arcis.

This banker, recently made count and peer of France, expected, no doubt, to transfer to his son, then thirty years of age, his electoral succession, in

order to make him some day eligible for the peerage. Already a major on the staff and a great favorite of the prince-royal, Charles Keller, now a viscount, belonged to the court party of the citizen-king. The most brilliant future seemed pledged to a young man enormously rich, full of energy, already remarkable for his devotion to the new dynasty, the grandson of the Comte de Gondreville, and nephew of the Maréchal de Carigliano; but this election, so necessary to his future prospects, presented suddenly certain difficulties to overcome.

Since the accession to power of the bourgeois class, Arcis had felt a vague desire to show itself independent. Consequently, the last election of François Keller had been disturbed by certain republicans, whose red caps and long beards had not, however, seriously alarmed the bourgeois of Arcis. By canvassing the country carefully the radical candidate would be able to secure some thirty or forty votes. A few of the townspeople, humiliated at seeing their town always treated as a rotten borough, joined the democrats, though enemies to democracy. In France, under the system of balloting, politico-chemical products are formed in which the laws of affinity are reversed.

Now, to elect young Keller in 1839, after having elected his father for twenty years, would show a monstrous electoral servitude, against which the pride of the newly enriched bourgeoisie revolted, for they felt themselves to be fully worth either Monsieur Malin, otherwise called Comte de Gondreville, the Keller Bros., the Cinq-Cygnés, or even, the King of the French.

The numerous partisans of old Gondreville, the king of the department of the Aube, were therefore awaiting some fresh proof of his ability, already so thoroughly tested, to circumvent this rising revolt. In order not to compromise the influence of his family in the arrondissement of Arcis, that old statesman would doubtless propose for candidate some young man who could be induced to accept an official function and then yield his place to Charles Keller, — a parliamentary arrangement which renders the elect of the people subject to re-election.

When Simon Giguët sounded the old notary Grévin, the faithful friend of the Comte de Gondreville, on the subject of the elections, the old man replied that, while he did not know the intentions of the Comte de Gondreville, he should himself vote for Charles Keller and employ his influence for that election.

As soon as this answer of old Grévin had circulated through Arcis, a reaction against him set in. Although for thirty years this provincial Aristides possessed the confidence of the whole town, — having been mayor of Arcis from 1804 to 1814 and again during the Hundred Days, — and although the Opposition had accepted him as their leader until the triumph of 1830, at which period he refused the honors of the mayoralty on the ground of his great age, and finally, although the town, in order to manifest its affection for him, elected his son-in-law, Monsieur Beauvisage, mayor in his stead, it now revolted against him, and some young striplings went so far as to talk of his dotage. The partisans of Simon Giguët then turned to Philéas Beauvisage, the mayor, and won him over

the more easily to their side because, without having quarrelled with his father-in-law, he assumed an independence of him which had ended in coldness, — an independence that the sly old notary allowed him to maintain, seeing in it an excellent means of action on the town of Arcis.

The mayor, questioned the evening before in the open street, declared positively that he should cast his vote for the first-comer on the list of eligibles rather than give it to Charles Keller, for whom, however, he had a high esteem.

“Arcis shall be no longer a rotten borough!” he said, “or I’ll emigrate to Paris.”

Flatter the passions of the moment and you will always be a hero, even at Arcis-sur-Aube.

“Monsieur le maire,” said everybody, “gives noble proof of his firmness of character.”

Nothing progresses so rapidly as a legal revolt. That evening Madame Marion and her friends organized for the morrow a meeting of “independent electors” in the interests of Simon Giguët, the colonel’s son. The morrow had now come and had turned the house topsy-turvy to receive the friends on whose independence the leaders of the movement counted. Simon Giguët, the native-born candidate of a little town jealously desirous to elect a son of its own, had, as we have seen, put to profit this desire; and yet, the whole prosperity and fortune of the Giguët family were the work of the Comte de Gondreville. But when it comes to an election, what are sentiments!

This Scene is written for the information of countries so unfortunate as not to know the blessings of national



representation, and which are, therefore, ignorant by what intestinal convulsions, what Brutus-like sacrifices, a little town gives birth to a deputy. Majestic but natural spectacle, which may, indeed, be compared with that of childbirth, — the same throes, the same impurities, the same lacerations, the same final triumph!

It may be asked why an only son, whose fortune was sufficient, should be, like Simon Giguët, an ordinary barrister in a little country town where barristers are pretty nearly useless. A word about the candidate is therefore necessary.

Colonel Giguët had had, between 1806 and 1813 by his wife who died in 1814, three children, the eldest of whom, Simon, alone survived. Until he became an only child, Simon was brought up as a youth to whom the exercise of a profession would be necessary. And about the time he became by the death of his brothers the family heir, the young man met with a serious disappointment. Madame Marion had counted much, for her nephew, on the inheritance of his grandfather the banker of Hamburg. But when that old German died in 1826, he left his grandson Giguët a paltry two thousand francs a year. The worthy banker, endowed with great procreative powers, having soothed the worries of business by the pleasures of paternity, favored the families of eleven other children who surrounded him, and who made him believe, with some appearance of justice, that Simon Giguët was already a rich man.

Besides all this, the colonel was bent on giving his son an independent position, and for this reason: the Giguëts could not expect any government favors under the Restoration. Even if Simon had not been the

son of an ardent Bonapartist, he belonged to a family whose members had justly incurred the animosity of the Cinq-Cygne family, owing to the part which Giguët, the colonel of gendarmerie, and the Marions, including Madame Marion, had taken as witnesses on the famous trial of the Messieurs de Simeuse, unjustly condemned in 1805 for the abduction of the Comte de Gondreville, then senator, and formerly representative of the people, who had despoiled the Cinq-Cygne family of their property. [See "An Historical Mystery."]

Grévin was not only one of the most important witnesses at that trial, but he was one of the chief promoters of the prosecution. That affair divides to this day the arrondissement of Arcis into two parties; one of which declares the innocence of the condemned, and upholds the Cinq-Cygne family; the other standing by the Comte de Gondreville and his adherents. Though, under the Restoration, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne used all the influence the return of the Bourbons gave her to arrange things as she wished in the department of the Aube, the Comte de Gondreville contrived to counterbalance this Cinq-Cygne royalty by the secret authority he wielded over the liberals of the town through the notary Grévin, Colonel Giguët, his son-in-law Keller (always elected deputy in spite of the Cinq-Cygnés), and also by the credit he maintained, as long as Louis XVIII. lived, in the counsels of the crown. It was not until after the death of that king that the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne was able to get Michu appointed judge of the court of assizes in Arcis. She desired of all things to obtain this place for the son of the steward who had perished on the scaffold at

Troyes, the victim of his devotion to the Simeuse family, whose full-length portrait always hung in her salon, whether in Paris or at Cinq-Cygne. Until 1823 the Comte de Gondreville had possessed sufficient power over Louis XVIII. to prevent this appointment of Michu.

It was by the advice of the Comte de Gondreville that Colonel Giguet made his son a lawyer. Simon had all the more opportunity of shining at the bar in the arrondissement of Arcis because he was the only barrister, solicitors pleading their own cases in these petty localities. The young man had really secured certain triumphs in the court of assizes of the Aube, but he was none the less an object of derision to Frédéric Marest, *procureur-du-roi*, Olivier Vinet, the substitute *procureur*, and the judge, Michu, — the three best minds in the court.

Simon Giguet, like other men, paid goodly tribute to the mighty power of ridicule that pursued him. He liked to hear himself talk, and he talked on all occasions; he solemnly delivered himself of dry and long-winded sentences which passed for eloquence among the upper bourgeoisie of Arcis. The poor fellow belonged to that species of bore which desires to explain everything, even the simplest thing. He explained rain; he explained the revolution of July; he explained things impenetrable; he explained Louis-Philippe, Odilon Barrot, Monsieur Thiers, the Eastern Question; he explained Champagne; he explained 1788; he explained the tariff of custom houses and humanitarians, magnetism and the economy of the civil list.

This lean young man, with a bilious skin, tall enough to justify his sonorous nullity (for it is rare that a tall man does not have eminent faculties of some kind) out-did the puritanism of the votaries of the extreme Left, all of them so sensitive, after the manner of prudes who have their intrigues to hide. Dressed invariably in black, he wore a white cravat which came down low on his chest, so that his face seemed to issue from a horn of white paper, for the collar of his shirt was high and stiff after a fashion now, fortunately, exploded. His trousers and his coats were always too large for him. He had what is called in the provinces dignity; that is to say, he was stiffly erect and pompously dull in manner. His friend, Antonin Goulard, accused him of imitating Monsieur Dupin. And, in truth, the young barrister was apt to wear shoes and stout socks of black filoselle.

Protected by the respect that every one bore to his father, and by the influence exercised by his aunt over a little town whose principal inhabitants had frequented her salon for many years, Simon Giguët, possessing already ten thousand francs a year, not counting the fees of his profession and the fortune his aunt would not fail to leave him, felt no doubt of his election. Nevertheless, the first sound of the bell announcing the arrival of the most influential electors echoed in the heart of the ambitious aspirant and filled it with vague fears. Simon did not conceal from himself the cleverness and the immense resources of old Grévin, nor the prestige attending the means that would surely be employed by the ministry to promote the candidacy of a young and dashing officer then in Africa, attached to the staff of the prince-royal.

•

"I think," he said to his father, "that I have the colic; I feel a warmth at the pit of my stomach that makes me very uneasy."

"Old soldiers," replied the colonel, "have the same feeling when they hear the cannon beginning to growl at the opening of a battle."

"What will it be in the Chamber!" said the barrister.

"The Comte de Gondreville told me," said the old colonel, "that he has known more than one orator affected with the qualms which precede, even with us old fire-eaters, the opening of a battle. But all this is idle talk. You want to be a deputy," added the old man, shrugging his shoulders, "then be one!"

"Father, the real triumph will be Cécile! Cécile has an immense fortune. Now-a-days an immense fortune means power."

"Dear me! how times have changed! Under the Emperor men had to be brave."

"Each epoch is summed up in a phrase," said Simon, recalling an observation of the Comte de Gondreville, which paints that personage well. He remarked: "Under the Empire, when it was desirable to destroy a man, people said, 'He is a coward.' To-day we say, 'He is a cheat.'"

"Poor France! where are they leading you?" cried the colonel; "I shall go back to my roses."

"Oh, stay, father! You are the keystone of the arch."

## III.

## OPPOSITION DEFINES ITSELF.

THE mayor, Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage, was the first to present himself, accompanied by the successor of his father-in-law, the busiest notary in town, Achille Pigoult, grandson of an old man who had continued justice of the peace in Arcis during the Revolution, the Empire, and the Restoration. Achille Pigoult, thirty-two years of age, had been eighteen years a clerk in old Grévin's office with no means of becoming himself a notary. His father, son of the justice of peace, had died of a so-called apoplexy, having gone wrong in business.

The Comte de Gondreville, however, with whom old Pigoult had relations dating back to 1793, lent money for the necessary security, and thus enabled the grandson of the judge who made the first examination in the Simeuse case to buy the practice of his master, Grévin. Achille had set up his office in the Place de l'Église, in a house belonging to the Comte de Gondreville, which the latter had leased to him at so low a price that any one could see how desirous that crafty politician was to hold the leading notary of Arcis in the hollow of his hand.

Young Pigoult, a short, skinny man, whose eyes seemed to pierce the green spectacles which could not

modify the spitefulness of his glance, well-informed as to all the interests of the neighborhood, owing his aptitude in managing affairs to a certain facility of speech, passed for what is called a *quizzier*, saying things plainly and with more cleverness than the aborigines could put into their conversations. Still a bachelor, he was awaiting a rich marriage through the good offices of his two protectors, Grévin and the Comte de Gondreville. Consequently, barrister Giguët was not a little surprised on seeing Achille appear at the meeting in company with Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage.

The notary, whose face was so seamed by the small-pox that it seemed to be covered with a white net, formed a perfect contrast to the rotund person of the mayor, whose face resembled a full moon, but a warm and lively moon; its tones of lily and of rose being still further brightened by a gracious smile, the result not so much of a disposition of the soul as of that formation of the lips for which the word "simpering" seems to have been created. Philéas Beauvisage was endowed with so great a contentment with himself that he smiled on all the world and under all circumstances. Those simpering lips smiled at a funeral. The liveliness that abounded in his infantine blue eyes did not contradict that perpetual and well-nigh intolerable smile.

This internal satisfaction passed all the more readily for benevolence and affability, because Philéas had made himself a language of his own, remarkable for its immoderate use of the formulas of politeness. He always "had the honor;" to all his inquiries as to the health of absent persons he added the adjectives

“dear,” “good,” “excellent.” He lavished condoling or congratulatory phrases apropos of all the petty miseries and all the little felicities of life. He concealed under a deluge of commonplaces his native incapacity, his total want of education, and a weakness of character which can only be expressed by the old word “weathercock.” Be not uneasy: the weathercock had for its axis the beautiful Madame Beauvisage, Séverine Grévin, the most remarkable woman in the arrondissement.

When Séverine heard of what she called her husband’s “freak” as to the election, she said to him on the morning of the meeting at Madame Marion’s:—

“It was well enough to give yourself an air of independence; but you mustn’t go to that Giguët meeting unless Achille Pigoult accompanies you; I’ve told him to come and take you.”

Giving Achille Pigoult as mentor to Beauvisage meant sending a spy from the Gondreville party to the Giguët assemblage. We may therefore imagine the grimace which contracted the puritan visage of Simon, who was forced to welcome graciously an *habitué* of his aunt’s salon and an influential elector, in whom, nevertheless, he saw an enemy.

“Ah!” he thought to himself, “what a mistake I made in refusing him that security when he asked for it! Old Gondreville had more sense than I— Good-day to you, Achille,” he said, assuming a jaunty manner; “I suppose you mean to trip me up.”

“Your meeting isn’t a conspiracy against the independence of our votes,” replied the notary, smiling. “We are all playing above-board, I take it.”



“Above-board,” echoed Beauvisage.

And the mayor began to laugh with that expressionless laugh by which some persons end all their sentences; which may, perhaps, be called the *ritornello* of their conversation. After which he placed himself in what we must describe as his third position, standing full-front, his chest expanded, and his hands behind his back. He was dressed in black coat and trousers, with an effulgent white waistcoat, opened in such a way as to show two diamond shirt-buttons worth several thousand francs.

“We shall fight, but we shall not be the less good friends,” he said. “That is the essence of constitutional morals; he! he! he! That is how *I* understand the alliance of monarchy with liberty; ha! ha! ha!”

Whereupon the mayor took Simon’s hand, saying:

“How are you, my good friend? Your dear mother and our worthy colonel are no doubt as well to-day as they were yesterday, — that is, I presume so, — he! he! he!” adding, with an air of perfect beatitude, “perhaps a little agitated by the ceremony now about to take place. Ha! ha! young man; so we intend to enter a political career? Ha! ha! ha! This is our first step — must n’t step back — it is a great career. I’d rather it were you than I to rush into the storms and tempests of the legislative body, hi! hi! — however agreeable it may be to see that body in our own person, hi! hi! hi! — the sovereign power of France in one four hundred and fifty-third! Hi! hi! hi!”

The vocal organ of Philéas Beauvisage had an agreeable sonority altogether in harmony with the leguminous curves of his face (of the color of a light yellow

pumpkin), his solid back, and his broadly expanded chest. That voice, bass in volume, could soften to a barytone and utter, in the giggle with which Philéas ended his phrases, a silvery note. When God desired, in order to place all species of mankind in this his terrestrial paradise, to create within it a provincial bourgeois, his hands never made a more perfect and complete type than Philéas Beauvisage.

"I admire," said that great work, "the devotion of those who fling themselves into the tumult of political life; he! he! he! It takes more nerve than I possess. Who could have told us in 1812 or 1813 that we should come to this? As for me, nothing can surprise me in these days, when asphalt, india-rubber, railroads, and steam have changed the ground we tread on, and overcoats, and distances, he, he!"

These last words were seasoned with a prolonged laugh, and accompanied by a gesture which he had made more especially his own: he closed his right fist, struck it into the rounded palm of his left hand, and rubbed it there with joyous satisfaction. This performance coincided with his laughs on the frequent occasions when he thought he had said a witty thing. Perhaps it is superfluous to add that Philéas Beauvisage was regarded in Arcis as an amiable and charming man.

"I shall endeavor," replied Simon Giguet, "to worthily represent —"

"The sheep of Champagne," interpolated Achille Pigoult, interrupting him.

The candidate swallowed that shaft without reply, for he was forced at that moment to go forward and receive two more influential electors.

One was the landlord of the Mulet, the best inn in Arcis, standing on the Grande-Place at the corner of the rue de Brienne. This worthy landlord, named Poupart, had married the sister of a man-servant attached to the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, the well-known Gothard, one of the actors and witnesses in the Simeuse affair.

Poupart, though a most devoted adherent of the Cinq-Cygne family, had been sounded during the last day or two, by Colonel Giguët's valet, with so much cleverness and perseverance that he thought he was doing an ill turn to the Comte de Gondreville, the enemy of the Cinq-Cygnés, by giving his influence to the election of Simon Giguët; and he was now conversing on that point with the man who accompanied him, an apothecary named Fromaget, who, as he did not furnish his wares to the château de Gondreville, desired nothing better than to cabal against the Kellers.

These two individuals of the lesser bourgeoisie could, in consequence of their connections, determine a certain number of floating votes, for they influenced and advised a number of persons to whom the political opinions of the candidate were a matter of indifference. Consequently, Simon took possession of Poupart, and delivered the apothecary Fromaget to his father, who had just come in to make his bow to the electors.

The sub-engineer of the arrondissement, the secretary of the mayor's office, four sheriffs, three solicitors, the clerk of the court, and the clerk of the justice of the peace, the registry-clerk, and the tax-collector,

all officials under government, two doctors, rivals of Varlet, Grévin's brother-in-law, a miller named Laurent Coussard, the head of the republicans of Arcis, the two assistant mayors, the printer and publisher of Arcis, and about a dozen other bourgeois arrived in succession, and walked about the garden until the gathering seemed numerous enough to admit of opening the session.

At length, about mid-day, fifty men, all in their best clothes, — most of them having come out of curiosity to see the handsome salons which were much talked of throughout the arrondissement, — were seated on the chairs Madame Marion had provided for them. The windows were left open, and presently so deep a silence reigned that the rustle of Madame Marion's gown was heard, — that good woman not being able to resist the pleasure of descending to the garden and placing herself in a corner whence she could listen to what went on in the salon. The cook, the chambermaid, and the man-servant stood in the dining-room and shared the emotions of their masters.

“Messieurs,” said Simon Giguët, “some among you desire to honor my father by asking him to preside at this meeting; but Colonel Giguët requests me to present his thanks, and express due gratitude for a desire in which he sees a reward for his services to the country. We are in his house; he thinks he ought, therefore, to decline those functions, and he desires to propose in his stead an honorable merchant on whom your suffrages have already bestowed the chief magistracy of this town, Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage.”

“Bravo! bravo!”

“We are, I think, all of one mind in adopting for this meeting — essentially friendly, but entirely free, which will prejudice in no way whatever the great preparatory and primary meeting in which you will produce your candidates and weigh their merits — in adopting, as I said, the parliamentary and constitutional — forms — of the — electoral Chamber.”

“Yes, yes!” cried the assembly with one voice.

“Consequently,” continued Simon, “I have the honor to request, according to the wish of all present, that his honor the mayor will now take the chair.”

Philéas rose and crossed the salon, conscious that he was becoming as red as a cherry. Then, when he stood behind the table, he saw, not a hundred eyes, but a hundred thousand candles. The sun seemed to him to be setting fire to the salon, and he had, to use his own expression, a lump of salt in his throat.

“Return thanks,” said Simon, in a low voice.

“Messieurs —”

Such total silence ensued that Philéas had a spasm of colic.

“What must I say, Simon?” he whispered.

“Well, well!” exclaimed Achille Pigoult.

“Messieurs,” said Simon, goaded by the sarcastic interjection of the little notary, “the honor which you have done to Monsieur le Maire may take him unawares, but it cannot surprise him.”

“That’s it,” said Beauvisage; “I am too sensible of this attention on the part of my fellow-citizens not to be excessively flattered by it.”

“Bravo!” cried the notary alone.

“The devil take me!” thought Beauvisage, “if I am ever caught haranguing again.”

“Will Messieurs Fromaget and Marcelin accept the functions of inspectors of the ballot?”

“It would be more regular,” said Achille Pigoult, rising, “if the meeting itself nominated those officers, — following, of course, the parliamentary forms of the Chamber.”

“That is best,” said the huge Monsieur Mollot, clerk of the court; “otherwise what is here taking place would be a mere farce; we should not be free in our action, in which case we might as well continue to do the will of Monsieur Simon Giguet.”

Simon said a few words to Beauvisage, who rose and delivered himself of a “Messieurs!” in palpitating tones.

“Pardon me, Monsieur le président,” said Achille Pigoult, “the chairman presides, he does not speak.”

“Messieurs” continued Beauvisage, prompted by Simon, “if we are — to conform — to parliamentary usage — I shall beg — the honorable gentleman — Monsieur Pigoult — to address the meeting — from this table — here present — ”

Pigoult sprang to the tea-table, stood beside it with his fingers resting lightly on its edge, and gave proof of his boldness by delivering the following speech without the slightest embarrassment, and somewhat after the manner of the illustrious Monsieur Thiers.

“Messieurs, it was not I who made that proposal for parliamentary usage; nevertheless I can conceive that an assemblage of some sixty notabilities of Champagne needs a chairman to guide it; for no flock can

get on without a shepherd. If we had voted for secret balloting, I am certain that the name of our excellent mayor would have been returned unanimously. His opposition to the candidate put forward by his relations proves to us that he possesses civic courage in the highest degree, inasmuch as he has dared to free himself from the closest ties — those of family. Patriotism before family! that is indeed so great an effort that, to make it, we are forced to believe that Brutus from his realm of justice still contemplates us after the lapse of two thousand, five hundred and some years. It seemed natural to Maitre Giguët, who had the merit of divining our wishes in the choice of a chairman, to guide us still further in selecting inspectors; but, if I am not mistaken, you think with me that once is enough — and you are right. Our mutual friend, Simon Giguët, who intends to offer himself as candidate, would have the air of assuming mastery, and he might, consequently, lose in our minds the goodwill we should otherwise bestow upon a modest attitude like that of his venerable father. Now what is our worthy chairman doing at this moment by accepting the method of presiding suggested to him by the candidate? He is depriving us of our liberty! I ask you: is it proper that the chairman of our choice should tell us to nominate, by rising or sitting, inspectors of the ballot thus forced upon us? Have we any liberty of choice? If I were proposed, I believe all present would rise out of politeness; indeed, we should all feel bound to rise for one another, and I say there can be no choice where there is no freedom of action."

“He is right,” said the sixty auditors.

“Therefore, let us each write two names on a ballot, and the two gentlemen who are elected will then feel themselves the real choice of this assembly; they will have the right, conjointly with our honorable chairman, to pronounce upon the majority when we come to a vote on the resolutions to be offered. We are here, I think, to promise to a candidate the fullest support that each can give at the coming primary meeting of all the electors of the arrondissement. This act is therefore, and I so declare it, a grave one. Does it not concern one four-hundredth part of the governing power, — as our excellent mayor has lately said with the ready wit that characterizes him and for which we have so high an appreciation?”

During these remarks Colonel Giguët was cutting a sheet of paper into strips, and Simon had sent for pens and ink.

This preliminary discussion on forms had already made Simon extremely uneasy, and had also aroused the attention of the sixty assembled bourgeois. Presently they began to write their ballots, and the wily Pigoult contrived to obtain a majority for Monsieur Mollot, the clerk of the court, and Monsieur Godivet, the registrar. These nominations were naturally very displeasing to Fromaget, the apothecary, and Marcelin the solicitor.

“You enable us,” said Achille Pigoult, “to manifest our independence. Therefore you may feel more pride in being rejected than you could have felt in being chosen.”

Everybody laughed.



Simon Giguet then produced silence by demanding speech of the chairman, whose shirt was already wet and became still wetter as he mustered all his courage to say : —

“ Monsieur Simon Giguet has the floor.”

## IV.

## THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY TEMPEST.

“ MESSIEURS,” said Simon Giguët, “ I ask permission to thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult, who, although our meeting is altogether friendly — ”

“ It is a meeting preparatory to the great primary meeting,” said the solicitor Marcelin.

“ That is what I was about to explain,” resumed Simon, “ I thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult for having insisted on the strictness of parliamentary forms. This is the first time that the arrondissement of Arcis has been at liberty to use — ”

“ At liberty ! ” said Pigoult, interrupting the orator.

“ At liberty ! ” cried the assembly.

“ At liberty,” continued Simon Giguët, “ to use its rights in the great battle of a general election to the Chamber of Deputies ; and as, in a few days, we shall have a meeting, at which all electors will be present, to judge of the merits of the candidates, we ought to feel ourselves most fortunate in becoming accustomed here, in this limited meeting, to the usages of great assemblies. We shall be all the more able to decide the political future of the town of Arcis ; for the question now is to substitute a town’s interests for family interests, a whole region for a man.”

Simon then reviewed the history of the Arcis elections for the last twenty years. While approving the constant election of François Keller, he said the moment had now come to shake off the yoke of the house of Gondreville. Arcis ought to be no more a fief of the liberals than a fief of the Cinq-Cygnés. Advanced opinions were arising in France of which the Kellers were not the exponents. Charles Keller, having become a viscount, belonged to the court; he could have no independence, because, in presenting him as candidate, his family thought much more of making him succeed to his father's peerage than of benefiting his constituency as deputy, etc., etc. And, finally, Simon presented himself to the choice of his fellow-citizens, pledging his word to sit on the same bench with the illustrious Odilon Barrot, and never to desert the glorious flag of Progress.

*Progress!* one of those words behind which more flimsy ambitions than ideas were trying to group themselves; for, after 1830, it represented only the pretensions of a few hungry democrats. Nevertheless, this word had still a great effect upon Arcis, and gave stability to whosoever might inscribe it on his banner. To call himself a man of progress was to declare himself a philosopher in all things and a puritan in politics; it declared him in favor of railroads, mackintoshes, penitentiaries, wooden pavements, negro freedom, savings-banks, seamless shoes, lighting by gas, asphalt pavements, universal suffrage, and reduction of the civil list. In short, it meant pronouncing himself against the treaties of 1815, against the Eldest Branch, against the colossus of the North, perfidious Albion,

against all enterprises, good or bad, of the government. Thus we see that the word *progress* might signify "No," as well as "Yes." It was gilding put upon the word *liberalism*, a new pass-word for new ambitions.

"If I have rightly understood what this meeting is for," said Jean Violette, a stocking-maker, who had recently bought the Beauvisage house, "it is to pledge ourselves to support, by employing every means in our power, Monsieur Simon Giguët at the elections as deputy in place of Comte François Keller. If each of us intends to coalesce in this manner we have only to say plainly Yes or No on that point."

"That is going too quickly to the point! Political affairs do not advance in that way, or there would be no politics at all!" cried Pigoult, whose old grandfather, eighty-six years old, had just entered the room. "The last speaker undertakes to decide what seems to me, according to my feeble lights, the very object we are met to discuss. I demand permission to speak."

"Monsieur Achille Pigoult has the floor," said Beauvisage, at last able to pronounce that phrase with all his municipal and constitutional dignity.

"Messieurs," said the notary, "if there is a house in Arcis in which no voice should be raised against the influence of the Comte de Gondreville, it is surely the one we are now in. The worthy Colonel Giguët is the only person in it who has not sought the benefits of the senatorial power; he, at least, has never asked anything of the Comte de Gondreville, who took his name off the list of exiles in 1815 and caused him to receive the pension which the colonel now enjoys without lifting a finger to obtain it."

A murmur, flattering to the old soldier, greeted this observation.

“But,” continued the orator, “the Marions are covered with the count’s benefits. Without that influence, the late Colonel Giguët would not have commanded the gendarmerie of the Aube. The late Monsieur Marion would not have been chief-justice of the Imperial court without the protection of the count, to whom I myself have every reason to be thankful. You will therefore think it natural that I should be his advocate within these walls. There are, indeed, few persons in this arrondissement who have not received benefits from that family.”

[Murmurs.]

“A candidate puts himself in the stocks,” continued Achille Pigoult, warming up. “I have the right to scrutinize his life before I invest him with my powers. I do not desire ingratitude in the delegate I may help to send to the Chamber, for ingratitude is like misfortune — one ingratitude leads to others. We have been, he tells us, the stepping-stone of the Kellers; well, from what I have heard here, I am afraid we may become the stepping-stone of the Giguëts. We live in a practical age, do we not? Well, then, let us examine into what will be the results to the arrondissement of Arcis if Simon Giguët is elected. They talk to you of independence! Simon, whom I thus maltreat as candidate, is my personal friend, as he is that of all who hear me, and I should myself be charmed to see him the orator of the Left, seated between Garnier-Pagès and Lafitte; but how would that benefit the arrondissement? The arron-

dissement would lose the support of the Comte de Gondreville and the Kellers. We all, in the course of five years, have had and shall have need of the one and of the others. Some have gone to the Maréchale de Carigliano to obtain the release of a young fellow who had drawn a bad number. Others have had recourse to the influence of the Kellers in many matters which are decided according to their recommendation. We have always found the old Comte de Gondreville ready to do us service. It is enough to belong to Arcis to obtain admission to him without being forced to kick our heels in his antechamber. Those two families know every one in Arcis. Where is the financial influence of the Giguets, and what power have they with the ministry? Have they any standing at the Bourse? When we want to replace our wretched wooden bridge with one of stone can they obtain from the department and the State the necessary funds? By electing Charles Keller we shall cement a bond of friendship which has never, to this day, failed to do us service. By electing my good, my excellent schoolmate, my worthy friend Simon Giguet, we shall realize nothing but losses until the far-distant time when he becomes a minister. I know his modesty well enough to be certain he will not contradict me when I say that I doubt his election to the post of deputy. [Laughter.] "I have come to this meeting to oppose a course which I regard as fatal to our arrondissement. Charles Keller belongs to the court, they say to me. Well, so much the better! we shall not have to pay the costs of his political apprenticeship; he knows the affairs of the country; he knows parliamentary necessities; he is much nearer being a

statesman than my friend Simon, who will not pretend to have made himself a Pitt or a Talleyrand in a little town like Arcis — ”

“ Danton went from it!” cried Colonel Giguet, furious at Achille’s speech and the justice of it.

“ Bravo!”

This was an acclamation, and sixty persons clapped their hands.

“ My father has a ready wit,” whispered Simon Giguet to Beauvisage.

“ I do not understand why, apropos of an election,” continued the old colonel, rising suddenly, with the blood boiling in his face, “ we should be hauled up for the ties which connect us with the Comte de Gondreville. My son’s fortune comes from his mother; he has asked nothing of the Comte de Gondreville. The comte might never have existed and Simon would have been what he now is, — the son of a colonel of artillery who owes his rank to his services; a man whose opinions have never varied. I should say openly to the Comte de Gondreville if he were present: ‘ We have elected your son-in-law for twenty years; to-day we wish to prove that in so doing we acted of our own free-will, and we now elect a man of Arcis, in order to show that the old spirit of 1789, to which you owe your fortune, still lives in the land of Danton, Malin, Grévin, Pigault, Marion — That is all!’ ”

And the old man sat down. Whereupon a great hubbub arose. Achille opened his mouth to reply. Beauvisage, who would not have thought himself chairman unless he had rung his bell, increased the racket, and called for silence. It was then two o’clock.

"I shall take the liberty to observe to the honorable Colonel Giguët, whose feelings are easily understood, that he took upon himself to speak, which is against parliamentary usage," said Achille Pigoult.

"I think it is not necessary to call the colonel to order," said the chairman. "He is a father —"

Silence was re-established.

"We did not come here," cried Fromaget, "to say Amen to everything the Messieurs Giguët, father and son, may wish —"

"No! no!" cried the assembly.

"Things are going badly," said Madame Marion to her cook in the garden.

"Messieurs," resumed Achille, "I confine myself to asking my friend Simon Giguët, categorically, what he expects to do for our interests."

"Yes! yes!" cried the assembly.

"Since when, demanded Simon Giguët, "have good citizens like those of Arcis made trade and barter of the sacred mission of deputy?"

It is impossible to represent the effect produced by noble sentiments on a body of men. They will applaud fine maxims, while they none the less vote for the degradation of their country, like the galley-slave who shouted for the punishment of Robert Macaire when he saw the thing played, and then went off and killed his own Monsieur Germeuil.

"Bravo!" cried several true-blood Giguët electors.

"You will send me to the Chamber," went on Simon, "if you do send me, to represent principles, the principles of 1789; to be one of the ciphers, if you choose, of the Opposition, but a cipher that votes with it to



enlighten the government, make war against abuses, and promote progress in all things — ”

“What do you call progress?” asked Fromaget. “For us, progress means getting the waste lands of la Champagne under cultivation.”

“Progress! I will explain to you what I mean by that,” cried Giguët, exasperated by the interruption.

“It is the frontier of the Rhine for France,” put in the colonel, “and the destruction of the treaties of 1815.”

“It is selling wheat dear and keeping bread cheap,” cried Achille Pigoult sarcastically, thinking that he made a joke, but actually expressing one of the delusions that reign in France.

“It is the happiness of all, obtained by the triumph of humanitarian doctrines,” continued Simon.

“What did I tell you?” said Achille to his neighbors.

“Hush! silence! let us listen!” said various voices.

“Messieurs,” said the stout Mollot, smiling, “the debate is beginning; give your attention to the orator; and let him explain himself.”

“In all transitional epochs, Messieurs,” continued Simon, gravely, “and we are now in such an epoch — ”

“Ba-a-a! ba-a-a!” bleated a friend of Achille Pigoult, who possessed the faculty (precious at elections) of ventriloquism.

A roar of laughter came from the whole assembly, who were Champagnards before all else. Simon Giguët folded his arms and waited till the tumult subsided.

“If it was intended to give me a lesson,” he resumed, “and to tell me that I belong to the flock of

the glorious defenders of the rights of humanity, the flock of the immortal priest who pleads for dying Poland, the daring pamphleteers, the scrutinizers of the civil test, the philosophers who demand sincerity in the working of our institutions, if that was the intention of my nameless interrupter, I thank him. To me, progress is the realization of all that was promised to us by the revolution of July; it is electoral reform, it is —”

“What! are you a democrat?” said Achille Pigoult.

“No,” replied the candidate. “To desire the legitimate and regular development of our institutions, is that being a democrat? To me, progress is fraternity re-established between the members of the great French family. We cannot conceal from ourselves that many sufferings —”

At three o'clock Simon Giguet was still explaining Progress, accompanied by the rhythmic snores of various electors which denoted a sound sleep. The malicious Achille Pigoult had urged all present to listen religiously to the young orator, who was now floundering in his phrases and paraphrases hopelessly at random.

## V.

## THE PERPLEXITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ARCIS.

At this moment several groups of bourgeois, electors and non-electors, were standing before the Château d'Arcis, the iron gates of which open on the square near to the door of Madame Marion's house. This square is a piece of open ground from which issue several roads and several streets. In it is a covered market. Opposite to the château, on the other side of the square, which is neither paved nor macadamized, and where the rain has made various little gutters, is a fine esplanade, called the Avenue of Sighs. Is that to the honor or to the blame of the leaders of the town? This singular amphibology is no doubt a stroke of native wit.

Two handsome side avenues, planted with lindens, lead from the square to a circular boulevard which forms another promenade, though usually deserted, where more dirt and rubbish than promenaders may commonly be seen.

At the height of the discussion which Achille Pigout was dramatizing with a coolness and courage worthy of a member of a real parliament, four personages were walking down one of the linden avenues which led from the Avenue of Sighs. When they reached the square, they stopped as if by common consent, and

looked at the inhabitants of Arcis, who were humming before the château like so many bees before returning to their hives at night. The four promenaders were the whole ministerial conclave of Arcis, namely: the sub-prefect, the *procureur-du-roi*, his substitute, and the examining-judge, Monsieur Martener. The judge of the court, Monsieur Michu, was, as we know already, a partisan of the Elder Branch and a devoted adherent of the house of Cinq-Cygne.

"No, I don't understand the action of the government," repeated the sub-prefect, Antonin Goulard, pointing to the groups which seemed to be thickening. "At such an important crisis to leave me without instructions!"

"In that you are like the rest of us," said Olivier Vinet, the substitute, smiling.

"Why do you blame the government?" asked the *procureur-du-roi*, Frédéric Marest.

"The ministry is much embarrassed," remarked young Martener. "It knows that this arrondissement belongs, in a certain way, to the Kellers, and it is very desirous not to thwart them. It is forced to keep on good terms with the only man who is comparable to Monsieur de Talleyrand. It is not to the prefect, but to the Comte de Gondreville that you ought to send the commissary of police."

"Meanwhile," said Frédéric Marest, "the Opposition is bestirring itself; you see yourselves the influence of Monsieur Giguët. Our mayor, Monsieur Beauvisage, is presiding over that preparatory meeting."

"After all," said Olivier Vinet slyly to the sub-

prefect, "Simon Giguet is your friend and school-mate; he will belong to the Thiers' party; you risk nothing in supporting his election."

"The present ministry could dismiss me before its fall," replied the sub-prefect, "and who knows when I should be reappointed?"

"Collinet, the grocer! — that makes the sixty-sixth elector who has entered the Giguet house," said Monsieur Martener, who was practising his trade as examining-judge by counting the electors. •

"If Charles Keller is the ministerial candidate," resumed the sub-prefect, "I ought to have been told of it; the government makes a mistake in giving time for Simon Giguet to get hold of the electors."

These four individuals had now reached, walking slowly, the spot where the avenue ceases and becomes an open square.

"There's Monsieur Groslier," said the judge, catching sight of a man on horseback.

This was the commissary of police; he saw the government of Arcis collected on the public square, and he rode up to the four gentlemen.

"Well, Monsieur Groslier?" said the sub-prefect, taking the commissary a little apart from his three colleagues.

"Monsieur," said the commissary of police in a low voice, "Monsieur le préfet has sent me to tell you some sad news; Monsieur le Vicomte Charles Keller is dead. The news reached Paris by telegram night before last, and the two Messieurs Keller, the Comte de Gondreville, the Maréchale Carigliano, in fact the whole family are now at Gondreville. Abd-el-

Kader has resumed the offensive in Africa; the war is being vigorously carried on. This poor young man was among the first victims of the renewal of hostilities. You will receive confidential instructions, so Monsieur le préfet told me, in relation to the coming election."

"By whom?" asked the sub-prefect.

"If I knew that, the matter would not be confidential," replied the commissary. "In fact, I think the prefect himself does not know. He told me that the matter would be a secret one between you and the ministry."

Then he rode on, after seeing the sub-prefect lay his fingers on his lips as a warning to keep silence.

"Well, what news from the prefecture?" said the *procureur-du-roi*, when Goulard returned to the group of the three functionaries.

"Nothing satisfactory," replied Goulard, stepping quickly, as if he wanted to get away from the others, who now walked silently toward the middle of the square, somewhat piqued by the manner of the sub-prefect. There Monsieur Martener noticed old Madame Beauvisage, the mother of Philéas, surrounded by nearly all the bourgeois on the square, to whom she was apparently relating something. A solicitor, named Sinot, who numbered all the royalists of Arcis among his clients, and who had not gone to the Giguët meeting, now detached himself from the group, and running to the door of the Marion house rang the bell violently.

"What can be the matter?" said Frédéric Marest, dropping his eyeglass, and calling the attention of his colleagues to this circumstance.

“The matter is, messieurs,” said the sub-prefect, thinking it useless to keep a secret which was evidently known to the other party, “that Charles Keller has been killed in Africa, and that this event doubles the chances of Simon Giguet. You know Arcis; there can be no other ministerial candidate than Charles Keller. Any other man would find the whole local patriotism of the place arrayed against him.

“Will they really elect such an idiot as Simon Giguet?” said Olivier Vinet, laughing.

This young substitute, then only twenty-three years of age, was the son of one of our most famous attorney-generals, who had come into power with the Revolution of July; he therefore owed his early entrance into public life to the influence of his father. The latter, always elected deputy by the town of Provins, is one of the buttresses of the Centre in the Chamber. Therefore the son, whose mother was a Demoiselle de Chargebœuf [see “Pierrette”], had a certain air of assurance, both in his functions and in his personal behavior, that plainly showed the backing of his father. He expressed his opinion on men and things without reserve; for he confidently expected not to stay very long at Arcis, but to receive his appointment as *procureur-du-roi* at Versailles, a sure step to a post in Paris.

The confident air of this little Vinet, and the sort of assumption which the certainty of making his way gave to him, was all the more irritating to Frédéric Marest, his superior, because a biting wit accompanied the rather undisciplined habits and manners of his young subordinate. Frédéric Marest, *procureur-du-roi*, a man

about forty years of age, who had spent six years of his life under the Restoration in becoming a substitute only to be neglected and left in Arcis by the government of July, in spite of the fact that he had some eighteen thousand francs a year of his own, was perpetually kept on the rack between the necessity of winning the good graces of young Vinet's father — a touchy attorney-general who might become Keeper of the Seals — and of keeping his own dignity.

Olivier Vinet, slender in figure, with a pallid face, lighted by a pair of malicious green eyes, was one of those sarcastic young gentlemen, inclined to dissipation, who nevertheless know how to assume the pompous, haughty, and pedantic air with which magistrates arm themselves when they once reach the bench. The tall, stout, heavy, and grave *procureur-du-roi* had lately invented a system by which he hoped to keep out of trouble with the exasperating Olivier; he treated him as a father would treat a spoilt child.

"Olivier," he replied to his substitute, slapping him on the shoulder, "a man of your capacity ought to reflect that Maître Giguët is very likely to become deputy. You'd have made that remark just as readily before the people of Arcis as before us, who are safe friends."

"There is one thing against Giguët," observed Monsieur Martener.

This good young man, rather heavy but full of capacity, the son of a physician in Provins, owed his place to Vinet's father, who was long a lawyer in Provins and still continued to be the patron of its people as the Comte de Gondreville was the patron of the people of Arcis.



“What is that?” asked the sub-prefect.

“Local patriotism is always bitterly against a man who is imposed upon the electors,” replied the examining-judge, “but when it happens that the good people of Arcis have to elevate one of their own equals to the Chamber, envy and jealousy are stronger than patriotism.”

“That is very simple,” said the *procureur-du-roi*, “and very true. If you can manage to collect fifty ministerial votes you will find yourself master of the coming election,” he added, addressing the sub-prefect.

“It will do if you produce a candidate of the same calibre as Simon Giguët,” said Olivier Vinet.

The sub-prefect allowed an expression of satisfaction to appear upon his features, which did not escape the notice of his three companions, with whom, moreover, he had a full understanding. All four being bachelors, and tolerably rich, they had formed, without premeditation, an alliance against the dulness of the provinces. The three functionaries had already remarked the sort of jealousy that Goulard felt for Giguët, which a few words on their antecedents will explain.

Antonin Goulard, the son of a former huntsman to the house of Simeuse, enriched by the purchase of the confiscated property of *émigrés* was, like Simon Giguët, a son of Arcis. Old Goulard, his father, left the abbey of Valpreux (corruption of Val-des-Preux) to live in Arcis after the death of his wife, and he sent his son to the imperial lyceum, where Colonel Giguët had already placed his son Simon. The two schoolmates subsequently went through their legal studies in Paris

together, and their intimacy was continued in the amusements of youth. They promised to help each other to success in life whenever they entered upon their different careers. But fate willed that they should end by being rivals.

In spite of Goulard's manifest advantages, in spite of the cross of the Legion of honor which the Comte de Gondreville had obtained for him in default of promotion, the offer of his heart and position had been frankly declined when, about six months before this history begins, he had privately presented himself to Madame Beauvisage as a suitor for her daughter's hand. No step of that nature is ever taken secretly in the provinces. The *procureur-du-roi*, Frédéric Marest, whose fortune, buttonhole, and position were about on a par with those of Antonin Goulard, had received a like refusal, three years earlier, based on the difference of ages. Consequently, the two officials were on terms of strict politeness with the Beauvisage family, and laughed at them severally in private. Both had divined and communicated to each other the real motive of the candidacy of Simon Giguët, for they fully understood the hopes of Madame Marion; and they were bent on preventing her nephew from marrying the heiress whose hand had been refused to them.

"God grant that I may be master of this election," said Goulard, "and that the Comte de Gondreville may get me made a prefect, for I have no more desire than you to spend the rest of my days here, though I was born in Arcis."

"You have a fine opportunity to be elected deputy yourself, my chief," said Olivier Vinet to Marest.

"Come and see my father, who will, I think, arrive here from Provins in a few hours. Let us propose to him to have you chosen as ministerial candidate."

"Halt!" said Antonin; "the ministry has its own views about the deputy of Arcis."

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed Vinet, "there are two ministries: the one that thinks it makes elections, and another that thinks it profits by them."

"Don't let us complicate Antonin's difficulties," said Frédéric Marest, winking at his substitute.

The four officials, who had crossed the open square and were close to the Mulet inn, now saw Poupart leaving the house of Madame Marion and coming towards them. A moment later, and the *porte cochère* of that house vomited the sixty-seven conspirators.

"So you went to that meeting?" said Antonin Goulard to Poupart.

"I shall never go again, monsieur le sous-préfet," said the innkeeper. "The son of Monsieur Keller is dead, and I have now no object in going there. God has taken upon himself to clear the ground."

"Well, Pigoult, what happened?" cried Olivier Vinet, catching sight of the young notary.

"Oh!" said Pigoult, on whose forehead the perspiration, which had not dried, bore testimony to his efforts, "Simon has just told some news that made them all unanimous. Except five persons, — Poupart, my grandfather, Mollot, Sinot, and I, — all present swore, as at the *Jeu de Paume*, to employ every means to promote the triumph of Simon Giguët, of whom I have made a mortal enemy. Oh! we got warm, I can tell you! However, I led the Giguëts to fulminate

against the Gondrevilles. That puts the old count on my side. No later than to-morrow he will hear what the *soi-disant* patriots of Arcis have said about him and his corruptions and his infamies, to free their necks, as they called it, of his yoke."

"Unanimous, were they?" said Olivier Vinet, laughing.

"Unanimous *to-day*," remarked Monsieur Martener.

"Oh!" exclaimed Pigoult, "the general sentiment of the electors is for one of their own townsmen. Whom can you oppose to Simon Giguët, — a man who has just spent two hours in explaining the word *progress*."

"Take old Grévin!" cried the sub-prefect.

"He has no such ambition," replied Pigoult. "But we must first of all consult the Comte de Gondreville. Look, look!" he added; "see the attentions with which Simon is taking home that gilded booby, Beauvisage."

And he pointed to the candidate, who was holding the mayor by the arm and whispering in his ear. Beauvisage meantime was bowing right and left to the inhabitants, who gazed at him with the deference which provincials always testify to the richest man in their locality.

But there's no use cajoling *him*," continued Pigoult. "Cécile's hand does not depend on either her father or her mother."

"On whom, then?"

"On my old patron, Monsieur Grévin. Even if Simon is elected deputy, the town is not won."

Though the sub-prefect and Frédéric Marest tried

to get an explanation of these words, Pigoult refused to give the reason of an exclamation which seemed to them big with meaning and implying a certain knowledge of the plans of the Beauvisage family.

All Arcis was now in a commotion, not only on account of the fatal event which had just overtaken the Gondreville family, but because of the great resolution come to at the Giguet house, where Madame Marion and her three servants were hurriedly engaged in putting everything in its usual order, ready to receive her customary guests, whose curiosity would probably bring them that evening in large numbers.

## VI.

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814 FROM THE HOSIERY POINT  
OF VIEW.

CHAMPAGNE has all the appearance of a poor region, and it is a poor region. Its general aspect is sad; the land is flat. Passing through the villages, and even the towns, you will see nothing but miserable buildings of wood or half-baked clay; the best are built of brick. Stone is scarcely used at all except on public buildings. At Arcis the château, the law courts, and the church are the only stone buildings. Nevertheless, Champagne, or, if you prefer to say so, the departments of the Aube, Marne, and Haut-Marne, richly endowed with vineyards, the fame of which is world-wide, are otherwise full of flourishing industries.

Without speaking of the manufactures of Reims, nearly all the hosiery of France — a very considerable trade — is manufactured about Troyes. The surrounding country, over a circuit of thirty miles, is covered with workmen, whose looms can be seen through the open doors as we pass through the villages. These workmen are employed by agents, who themselves are in the service of speculators called manufacturers. The agents negotiate with the large Parisian houses, often with the retail hosiers, all of whom put out the sign, “Manufacturers of Hosiery.” None of them have ever made a pair of stockings, nor a cap, nor a

sock ; all their hosiery comes chiefly from Champagne, though there are a few skilled workmen in Paris who can rival the Champenois.

This intermediate agency between the producer and the consumer is an evil not confined to hosiery. It exists in almost all trades, and increases the cost of merchandise by the amount of the profit exacted by the middlemen. To break down these costly partitions, that injure the sale of products, would be a magnificent enterprise, which, in its results, would attain to the height of statesmanship. In fact, industry of all kinds would gain by establishing within our borders the cheapness so essential to enable us to carry on victoriously the industrial warfare with foreign countries, — a struggle as deadly as that of arms.

But the destruction of an abuse of this kind would not return to modern philanthropists the glory and the advantages of a crusade against the empty nutshells of the penitentiary and negrophobia ; consequently, the interloping profits of these *bankers of merchandise* will continue to weigh heavily both on producers and consumers. In France — keen-witted land ! — it is thought that to simplify is to destroy. The Revolution of 1789 is still a terror.

We see, by the industrial energy displayed in a land where Nature is a godmother, what progress agriculture might make if capital would go into partnership with the soil, which is not so thankless in Champagne as it is in Scotland, where capital has done wonders. The day when agriculture will have conquered the unfertile portion of those departments, and industry has seconded capital on the Champagne chalk, the pros-

perity of that region will triple itself. Into that land, now without luxury, where homes are barren, English comfort will penetrate, money will obtain that rapid circulation which is the half of wealth, and is already beginning in several of the inert portions of our country. Writers, administrators, the Church from its pulpit, the Press in its columns, all to whom chance has given power to influence the masses, should say and resay this truth, — to hoard is a social crime. The deliberate hoarding of a province arrests industrial life, and injures the health of a nation.

Thus the little town of Arcis, without much means of transition, doomed apparently to the most complete immobility, is, relatively, a rich town abounding in capital slowly amassed by its trade in hosiery.

Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage was the Alexander, or, if you will, the Attila of this business. And here follow the means by which this honorable merchant had acquired his supremacy over cotton.

The last remaining child of farmers named Beauvisage, tenants of the splendid farm of Bellache, a dependency of the Gondreville estate, his parents made, in 1811, a great sacrifice in order to buy a substitute and save their only child from the conscription. After that, in 1813, the mother Beauvisage, having become a widow, saved her son once more from enrolment in the Gardes, thanks to the influence of the Comte de Gondreville. Philéas, who was then twenty-one years of age, had been devoted for the last three years to the peaceable trade of hosiery.

Coming to the end of the lease of Bellache, old Madame Beauvisage declined to renew it. She saw



she had enough to do in her old age in taking care of her property. That nothing might give her uneasiness of mind, she proceeded, by the help of Monsieur Grévin, the notary of Arcis, to liquidate her husband's estate, although her son made no request whatever for a settlement. The result proved that she owed him the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs. The good woman did not sell her landed property, most of which came from the unfortunate Michu, the former bailiff of the Simeuse family; she paid the sum to Philéas in ready money, — advising him to buy out the business of his employer, Monsieur Pigoult, the son of the old justice of the peace, whose affairs were in so bad a way that his death, as we have said, was thought to be voluntary.

Philéas Beauvisage, a virtuous youth, having a deep respect for his mother, concluded the purchase from his patron, and as he had the bump of what phrenologists term “acquisitiveness,” his youthful ardor spent itself upon this business, which he thought magnificent and desired to increase by speculation.

The name of Philéas, which may seem peculiar, is only one of the many oddities which we owe to the Revolution. Attached to the Simeuse family, and consequently, good Catholics, the Beauvisage father and mother desired to have their son baptized. The rector of Cing-Cygne, the Abbé Goujet, whom they consulted, advised them to give their son for patron a saint whose Greek name might satisfy the municipality, — for the child was born at a period when children were inscribed on the civil registers under the fantastic names of the Republican calendar.

In 1814, hosiery, a stable business with few risks in ordinary times, was subject to all the variations in the price of cotton. This price depended at that time on the triumph or the defeat of the Emperor Napoleon, whose adversaries, the English generals, used to say in Spain: "The town is taken; now get out your bales."

Pigoult, former patron of young Philéas, furnished the raw material to his workmen, who were scattered all over the country. At the time when he sold the business to Beauvisage junior, he possessed a large amount of raw cotton bought at a high price, whereas Lisbon was sending enormous quantities into the Empire at six sous the kilogramme, in virtue of the Emperor's celebrated decree. The reaction produced in France by the introduction of the Portuguese cotton caused the death of Pigoult, Achille's father, and began the fortune of Philéas, who, far from losing his head like his master, made his prices moderate by buying cotton cheaply and in doubling the quantity ventured upon by his predecessor. This simple system enabled Philéas to triple the manufacture and to pose as the benefactor of the workingmen; so that he was able to disperse his hosiery in Paris and all over France at a profit, when the luckiest of his competitors were only able to sell their goods at cost price.

At the beginning of 1814, Philéas had emptied his warerooms. The prospect of a war on French soil, the hardships of which were likely to press chiefly on Champagne, made him cautious. He manufactured nothing, and held himself ready to meet all events with his capital turned into gold. At this period the

custom-house lines were no longer maintained. Napoleon could not do without his thirty thousand custom-house officers for service in the field. Cotton, then introduced through a thousand loopholes, slipped into the markets of France. No one can imagine how sly and how alert cotton had become at this epoch, nor with what eagerness the English laid hold of a country where cotton stockings sold for six francs a pair, and cambric shirts were objects of luxury.

Manufacturers of the second class, the principal workmen, reckoning on the genius of Napoleon, had bought up the cottons that came from Spain. They worked it up in hopes of being able later to give the law to the merchants of Paris. Philéas observed these facts. When the war ravaged Champagne, he kept himself between the French army and Paris. After each lost battle he went among the workmen who had buried their products in casks, — a sort of silo of hosiery, — then, gold in hand, this cossack of weaving bought up, from village to village, below the cost of fabrication, tons of merchandise which might otherwise become at any time a prey to an enemy whose feet were as much in need of being *socked* as its throat of being moistened.

Philéas displayed under these unfortunate circumstances an activity nearly equal to that of the Emperor. This general of hosiery made a commercial campaign of 1814 with splendid but ignored courage. A league or two behind where the army advanced he bought up caps and socks as the Emperor gathered immortal palms by his very reverses. The genius was equal on both sides, though exercised in different spheres; one

aimed at covering heads, the other at mowing them down. Obligated to create some means of transportation in order to save his tons of hosiery, which he stored in a suburb of Paris, Philéas often put in requisition horses and army-waggons, as if the safety of the empire were concerned. But the majesty of commerce was surely as precious as that of Napoleon. The English merchants, in buying out the European markets, certainly got the better of the colossus who threatened their trade.

By the time the Emperor abdicated at Fontainebleau, Philéas, triumphant, was master of the situation. He maintained, by clever manœuvring, the depreciation in cottons, and doubled his fortune at the moment when his luckiest competitors were getting rid of their merchandise at a loss of fifty per cent. He returned to Arcis with a fortune of three hundred thousand francs, half of which, invested on the Grand-Livre at sixty, returned him an income of fifteen thousand francs a year. He employed the remainder in building, furnishing, and adorning a handsome house on the Place du Pont in Arcis.

On the return of the successful hosier, Monsieur Grévin was naturally his confidant. The notary had an only daughter to marry, then twenty years of age. Grévin, a widower, knew the fortune of Madame Beauvisage, the mother, and he believed in the energy and capacity of a young man bold enough to have turned the campaign of 1814 to his profit. Séverine Grévin had her mother's fortune of sixty thousand francs for her dower. Grévin was then over fifty; he feared to die, and saw no chance of marrying his

daughter as he wished under the Restoration — for her, he had had ambition. Under these circumstances he was shrewd enough to make Philéas ask her in marriage.

Séverine Grévin, a well-trained young lady and handsome, was considered at that time the best match in Arcis. In fact, an alliance with the intimate friend of the senator Comte de Gondreville, peer of France, was certainly a great honor for the son of a Gondreville tenant-farmer. The widow Beauvisage, his mother, would have made any sacrifice to obtain it; but on learning the success of her son, she dispensed with the duty of giving him a *dot*, — a wise economy which was imitated by the notary.

Thus was consummated the union of the son of a farmer formerly so faithful to the Simeuse family with the daughter of its most cruel enemy. It was, perhaps, the only application made of the famous saying of Louis XVIII. : “Union and Oblivion.”

On the second return of the Bourbons, Grévin’s father-in-law, old Doctor Varlet, died at the age of seventy-six, leaving two hundred thousand francs in gold in his cellar, besides other property valued at an equal sum. Thus Philéas and his wife had, outside of their business, an assured income of thirty thousand francs a year.

The first two years of this marriage sufficed to show Madame Séverine and her father, Monsieur Grévin the absolute silliness of Philéas Beauvisage. His one gleam of commercial rapacity had seemed to the notary the result of superior powers; the shrewd old man had mistaken youth for strength, and luck for

genius in business. Philéas certainly knew how to read and write and cipher well, but he had read nothing. Of crass ignorance, it was quite impossible to keep up even a slight conversation with him; he replied to all remarks with a deluge of commonplaces pleasantly uttered. As the son of a farmer, however, Philéas was not without a certain commercial good sense, and he was also kind and tender, and would often weep at a moving tale. It was this native goodness of heart which made him respect his wife, whose superiority had always caused him the deepest admiration.

Séverine, a woman of ideas, knew all things, so Philéas believed. And she knew them the more correctly because she consulted her father on all subjects. She was gifted with great firmness, which made her the absolute mistress in her own home. As soon as the latter result was attained, the old notary felt less regret in seeing that his daughter's only domestic happiness lay in the autocracy which usually satisfies all women of her nature. But what of the woman herself? Here follows what she was said to have found in life.

## VII.

## THE BEAUVISAGE FAMILY.

DURING the reaction of 1815, a Vicomte de Chargebœuf (of the poorer branch of the family) was sent to Arcis as sub-prefect through the influence of the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, to whose family he was allied. This young man remained sub-prefect for five years. The beautiful Madame Beauvisage was not, it was said, a stranger to the reasons that kept him in this office for a period far too prolonged for his own advancement. We ought to say, however, that these remarks were not justified by any of the scandals which in the provinces betray those passions that are difficult to conceal from the Argus-eyes of a little town. If Séverine loved the Vicomte de Chargebœuf and was beloved by him, it was in all honor and propriety, said the friends of the Grévins and the Marions; and that double coterie imposed its opinion on the whole arrondissement; but the Marions and the Grévins had no influence on the royalists, and the royalists regarded the sub-prefect as fortunate in love.

As soon as the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne heard what was said in the châteaux about her relation, she sent for him; and such was her horror for all who were connected, near or far, with the actors in the judicial drama so fatal to her family, that she strictly enjoined

him to change his residence. Not only that, but she obtained his appointment as sub-prefect of Sancerre with the promise of advancement to the prefecture.

Some shrewd observers declared that the viscount pretended this passion for the purpose of being made prefect; for he well knew the hatred felt by the marquise for the name of Grévin. Others remarked on the coincidence of the viscount's apparitions in Paris with the visits made by Madame Beauvisage to the capital on frivolous pretexts. An impartial historian would be puzzled to form a just opinion on the facts of this matter, which are buried in the mysteries of private life. One circumstance alone seems to give color to the reports.

Cécile-Renée Beauvisage was born in 1820, just as Monsieur de Chargebœuf left Arcis, and among his various names was that of René. This name was given by the Comte de Gondreville as godfather of the child. Had the mother objected to the name, she would in some degree have given color to the rumor. As gossip always endeavors to justify itself, the giving of this name was said to be a bit of maliciousness on the part of the old count. Madame Keller, the count's daughter, who was named Cécile, was the godmother. As for the resemblance shown in the person of Cécile-Renée Beauvisage, it was striking. This young girl was like neither father nor mother; in course of time she had become the living image of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, whose aristocratic manners she had also acquired. This double resemblance, both moral and physical, was not observed by the inhabitants of Arcis, for the viscount never returned to that town.



Séverine made her husband happy in his own way. He liked good living and everything easy about him; she supplied him with the choicest wines, a table worthy of a bishop, served by the best cook in the department but without the pretensions of luxury; for she kept her household strictly to the conditions of the burgher life of Arcis. It was a proverb in Arcis that you must dine with Madame Beauvisage and spend your evening with Madame Marion.

The renewed influence in the arrondissement of Arcis which the Restoration gave to the house of Cinq-Cygne had naturally drawn closer the ties that bound together the various families affected by the criminal trial relating to the abduction of Gondreville. [See "An Historical Mystery."] The Marions, Grévins, and Giguets were all the more united because the triumph of their political opinions, called "constitutional," now required the utmost harmony.

As a matter of policy Séverine encouraged her husband to continue his trade in hosiery, which any other man but himself would have long renounced; and she sent him to Paris, and about the country, on business connected with it. Up to the year 1830 Philéas, who was thus enabled to exercise his bump of "acquisitiveness," earned every year a sum equivalent to his expenses. The interest on the property of Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage, being capitalized for the last fifteen years by Grévin's intelligent care, became, by 1830, a round sum of half a million of francs. That sum was, in fact, Cécile's *dot*, which the old notary then invested in the Three-per-cents at fifty, producing a safe income of thirty thousand a year.

After 1830 Beauvisage sold his business in hosiery to Jean Violette, one of his agents (grandson of one of the chief witnesses for the prosecution in the Simeuse trial), the proceeds of which amounted to three hundred thousand francs. Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage had also in prospect their double inheritance from old Grévin on one side, and the old farmer's wife Beauvisage on the other. Great provincial fortunes are usually the product of time multiplied by economy. Thirty years of old age make capital.

In giving to Cécile-Renée a *dot* of fifty thousand francs a year, her parents still reserved for themselves the two inheritances, thirty thousand a year on the Grand Livre, and their house in Arcis.

If the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne were only dead, Cécile might assuredly marry the young marquis; but the health of that great lady, who was still vigorous and almost beautiful at sixty years of age, precluded all hope of such a marriage if it even entered the minds of Grévin and his daughter, as some persons, surprised at their rejection of eligible suitors like the sub-prefect and the *procureur-du-roi*, declared that it did.

The Beauvisage residence, one of the best in Arcis, stands on the Place du Pont on a line with the rue Vide-Bourse, at the corner of the rue du Pont, which leads to the Place de l'Église. Though, like many provincial houses, without either court or garden, it produces a certain effect, in spite of its ornamentation in bad taste. The front door opens on the Place; the windows of the ground-floor look out on the street-side towards the post-house and inn, and command beyond the Place a rather picturesque view of the Aube, the

navigation of which begins at the bridge. Beyond the bridge is another little Place or square, on which lives Monsieur Grévin, and from which the high-road to Sézanne starts.

On the street and on the square, the Beauvisage house, painted a spotless white, looks as though built of stone. The height of the windows and their external mouldings contribute to give a certain style to the house which contrasts strongly with the generally forlorn appearance of the houses of Arcis, constructed, as we have already said, of wood, and covered with plaster, imitating the solidity of stone. Still, these houses are not without a certain originality, through the fact that each architect, or each burgher, has endeavored to solve for himself the problem of styles of building.

The bridge at Arcis is of wood. About four hundred feet above the bridge the river is crossed by another bridge, on which rise the tall wooden sides of a mill with several sluices. The space between the public bridge and this private bridge forms a basin, on the banks of which are several large houses. By an opening between the roofs can be seen the height on which stands the château of Arcis with its park and gardens, its outer walls and trees which overhang the river above the bridges, and the rather scanty pastures of the left bank.

The sound of the water as it runs through the courses above the dam, the music of the wheels, from which the churned water falls back into the basin in sparkling cascades, animate the rue du Pont, contrasting in this respect with the tranquillity of the river

flowing downward between the garden of Monsieur Grévin, whose house is at one angle of the bridge on the left bank, and the port where the boats and barges discharge their merchandise before a line of poor but picturesque houses.

Nothing can better express provincial life than the deep silence that envelops the little town and reigns in its busiest region. It is easy to imagine, therefore, how disquieting the presence of a stranger, if he only spends half a day there, may be to the inhabitants; with what attention faces protrude from the windows to observe him, and also the condition of espial in which all the residents of the little place stand to each other. Life has there become so conventional that, except on Sundays and fête-days, a stranger meets no one either on the boulevards or the Avenue of Sighs, not even, in fact, upon the streets.

It will now be readily understood why the ground-floor of the Beauvisage house is on a level with the street and square. The square serves as its courtyard. Sitting at his window the eyes of the late hosier could take in the whole of the Place de l'Église, the two squares of the bridge, and the road to Sézanne. He could see the coaches arriving and the travellers descending at the post-inn; and on court days he could watch the proceedings around the offices of the mayor and the justice of peace. For these reasons, Beauvisage would not have exchanged his house for the château, in spite of its lordly air, its stone walls, and its splendid situation.

## VIII.

IN WHICH THE DOT, ONE OF THE HEROINES OF  
THIS HISTORY, APPEARS.

ENTERING the Beauvisage house we find a vestibule, at the farther end of which rises the staircase. To right we enter a large salon with two windows opening on the square; to left is a handsome dining-room, looking on the street. The floor above is the one occupied by the family.

Notwithstanding the large fortune of the Beauvisage husband and wife, their establishment consisted of only a cook and a chamber-maid, the latter a peasant, who washed and ironed and frothed the floors rather than waited on her two mistresses, who were accustomed to spend their time in dressing and waiting upon each other. Since the sale of the business to Jean Violette, the horse and cabriolet used by Philéas, and kept at the Hôtel de la Poste, had been relinquished and sold.

At the moment when Philéas reached his house after the Giguet meeting, his wife, already informed of the resolutions passed, had put on her boots and shawl and was preparing to go to her father; for she felt very sure that Madame Marion would, on that same evening, make her certain overtures relating to Simon and Cécile. After telling his wife of Charles Keller's death, Philéas asked her opinion with an artless

“What do you think of that, wife?” which fully pictured his habit of deferring to Séverine’s opinion in all things. Then he sat down in an arm-chair and awaited her reply.

In 1839, Madame Beauvisage, then forty-four years old, was so well preserved that she might, in that respect, rival Mademoiselle Mars. By calling to mind the most charming Célimène that the Théâtre-Français ever had, an excellent idea of Séverine Grévin’s appearance will be obtained. The same richness of coloring, the same beauty of features, the same clearly defined outlines; but the hosier’s wife was short, — a circumstance which deprived her of that noble grace, that charming coquetry *à la Sévigné*, through which the great actress commends herself to the memory of men who saw both the Empire and the Restoration.

Provincial life and the rather careless style of dress into which, for the last ten years, Séverine had allowed herself to fall, gave a somewhat common air to that noble profile and those beautiful features; increasing plumpness was destroying the outlines of a figure magnificently fine during the first twelve years of her married life. But Séverine redeemed these growing imperfections with a sovereign, superb, imperious glance, and a certain haughty carriage of her head. Her hair, still black and thick and long, was raised high upon her head, giving her a youthful look. Her shoulders and bosom were snowy, but they now rose puffily in a manner to obstruct the free movement of the neck, which had grown too short. Her plump and dimpled arms ended in pretty little hands that were, alas, too fat. She was, in fact, so overdone with

fulness of life and health that her flesh formed a little pad, as one might call it, above her shoes. Two eardrops, worth about three thousand francs each, adorned her ears. She wore a lace cap with pink ribbons, a mousseline-de-laine gown in pink and gray stripes with an edging of green, opened at the bottom to show a petticoat trimmed with valenciennes lace; and a green cashmere shawl with palm-leaves, the point of which reached the ground as she walked.

"You are not-so hungry," she said, casting her eyes on Beauvisage, "that you can't wait half an hour? My father has finished dinner and I could n't eat mine in peace without knowing what he thinks and whether we ought to go to Gondreville."

"Go, go, my dear. I'll wait," said Philéas, using the "thee" and "thou."

"Good heavens!" cried Séverine with a significant gesture of her shoulders. "Shall I never break you of that habit of tutoying me?"

"I never do it before company — not since 1817," said Philéas.

"You do it constantly before the servants and your daughter."

"As you will, Séverine," replied Beauvisage sadly.

"Above all, don't say a word to Cécile about this resolution of the electors," added Madame Beauvisage, who was looking in the glass to arrange her shawl.

"Shall I go with you to your father's?" asked Philéas.

"No, stay with Cécile. Besides, Jean Violette was to pay the rest of the purchase-money to-day. He has twenty thousand francs to bring you. This is the

third time he has put us off three months ; don't grant him any more delays ; if he can't pay now, give his note to Courtet, the sheriff, and take the law of him. Achille Pigoult will tell you how to proceed. That Violette is the worthy son of his grandfather ; I think he is capable of enriching himself by going into bankruptcy, — there's neither law nor gospel in him."

"He is very intelligent," said Beauvisage.

"You have given him the good-will of a fine business for thirty thousand francs, which is certainly worth fifty thousand ; and in ten years he has only paid you ten thousand —"

"I never sued anybody yet," replied Beauvisage, "and I'd rather lose my money than torment a poor man —"

"A man who laughs at you !"

Beauvisage was silent ; feeling unable to reply to that cruel remark, he looked at the boards which formed the floor of the salon.

Perhaps the progressive abolition of mind and will in Beauvisage may be explained by the abuse of sleep. Going to bed every night at eight o'clock and getting up the next morning at eight, he had slept his twelve hours nightly for the last twenty years, never waking ; or if that extraordinary event did occur, it was so serious a matter to his mind that he talked of it all day. He spent an hour at his toilet, for his wife had trained him not to appear in her presence at breakfast unless properly shaved, cleaned, and dressed for the day. When he was in business, he departed to his office after breakfast and returned only in time for dinner. Since 1832, he had substituted for his busi-



ness occupations a daily visit to his father-in-law, a promenade about the town, or visits to his friends.

In all weather he wore boots, blue coat and trousers, and a white waistcoat, — the style of dress exacted by his wife. His linen was remarkable for its fineness and purity, owing to the fact that Séverine obliged him to change it daily. Such care for his person, seldom taken in the provinces, contributed to make him considered in Arcis very much as a man of elegance is considered in Paris. Externally this worthy seller of cotton hose seemed to be a personage; for his wife had sense enough never to utter a word which could put the public of Arcis on the scent of her disappointment and the utter nullity of her husband, who, thanks to his smiles, his handsome dress, and his manners, passed for a man of importance. People said that Séverine was so jealous of him that she prevented him from going out in the evening, while in point of fact Philéas was bathing the roses and lilies of his skin in happy slumber.

Beauvisage, who lived according to his tastes, pampered by his wife, well served by his two servants, cajoled by his daughter, called himself the happiest man in Arcis, and really was so. The feeling of Séverine for this nullity of a man never went beyond the protecting pity of a mother for her child. She disguised the harshness of the words she was frequently obliged to say to him by a joking manner. No household was ever more tranquil; and the aversion Philéas felt for society, where he went to sleep, and where he could not play cards (being incapable of learning a game), had made Séverine sole mistress of her evenings.

Cécile's entrance now put an end to her father's embarrassment, and he cried out heartily: —

“Hey! how fine we are!”

Madame Beauvisage turned round abruptly and cast a look upon her daughter which made the girl blush.

“Cécile, who told you to dress yourself in that way?” she demanded.

“Are not we going to-night to Madame Marion's? I dressed myself now to see if my new gown fitted me.”

“Cécile! Cécile!” exclaimed Séverine, “why do you try to deceive your mother? It is not right; and I am not pleased with you — you are hiding something from me.”

“What has she done?” asked Beauvisage, delighted to see his daughter so prettily dressed.

“What has she done? I shall tell her,” said Madame Beauvisage, shaking her finger at her only child.

Cécile flung herself on her mother's neck, kissing and coaxing her, which is a means by which only daughters get their own way.

Cécile Beauvisage, a girl of nineteen, had put on a gown of gray silk trimmed with gimp and tassels of a deeper shade of gray, making the front of the gown look like a pelisse. The corsage, ornamented with buttons and caps to the sleeves, ended in a point in front, and was laced up behind like a corset. This species of corset defined the back, the hips, and the bust perfectly. The skirt, trimmed with three rows of fringe, fell in charming folds, showing by its cut and its make the hand of a Parisian dressmaker. A

pretty fichu edged with lace covered her shoulders; around her throat was a pink silk neckerchief, charmingly tied, and on her head was a straw hat ornamented with one moss rose. Her hands were covered with black silk mittens, and her feet were in bronze kid boots. This gala air, which gave her somewhat the appearance of the pictures in a fashion-book, delighted her father.

Cécile was well-made, of medium height, and perfectly well-proportioned. She had braided her chestnut hair, according to the fashion of 1839, in two thick plaits which followed the line of the face and were fastened by their ends to the back of her head. Her face, a fine oval, and beaming with health, was remarkable for an aristocratic air which she certainly did not derive from either her father or her mother. Her eyes, of a light brown, were totally devoid of that gentle, calm, and almost timid expression natural to the eyes of young girls. Lively, animated, and always well in health, Cécile spoiled, by a sort of bourgeois matter-of-factness and the manners of a petted child, all that her person presented of romantic charm. Still, a husband capable of reforming her education and effacing the traces of provincial life, might still evolve from that living block a charming woman of the world.

Madame Beauvisage had had the courage to bring up her daughter to good principles; she had made herself employ a false severity which enabled her to compel obedience and repress the little evil that existed in the girl's soul. Mother and daughter had never been parted; thus Cécile had, what is more rare in young girls than is generally supposed, a purity of thought, a

freshness of heart, and a naïveté of nature, real, complete, and flawless.

“Your dress is enough to make me reflect,” said Madame Beauvisage. “Did Simon Giguët say anything to you yesterday that you are hiding from me?”

“Dear mamma,” said Cécile in her mother’s ear, “he bores me; but there is no one else for me in Arcis.”

“You judge him rightly; but wait till your grandfather has given an opinion,” said Madame Beauvisage, kissing her daughter, whose reply proved her great good-sense, though it also revealed the breach made in her innocence by the idea of marriage.

Séverine was devoted to her father; she and her daughter allowed no one but themselves to take charge of his linen; they knitted his socks for him, and gave the most minute care to his comfort. Grévin knew that no thought of self-interest had entered their affection; the million they would probably inherit could not dry their tears at his death; old men are very sensible of disinterested tenderness. Every morning before going to see him, Madame Beauvisage and Cécile attended to his dinner for the next day, sending him the best that the market afforded.

Madame Beauvisage had always desired that her father would present her at the Château de Gondreville and connect her with the count’s daughters; but the wise old man explained, again and again, how difficult it would be to have permanent relations with the Duchesse de Carigliano, who lived in Paris and seldom came to Gondreville, or with the brilliant Madame Keller, after doing a business in hosiery.

“Your life is lived,” he said to his daughter; “find all your enjoyments henceforth in Cécile, who will certainly be rich enough to give you an existence as broad and high as you deserve. Choose a son-in-law with ambition and means, and you can follow her to Paris and leave that jackass Beauvisage behind you. If I live long enough to see Cécile’s husband I’ll pilot you all on the sea of political interests, as I once piloted others, and you will reach a position equal to that of the Kellers.”

These few words were said before the revolution of July, 1830. Grévin desired to live that he might get under way the future grandeur of his daughter, his grand-daughter, and his great-grandchildren. His ambition extended to the third generation.

When he talked thus, the old man’s idea was to marry Cécile to Charles Keller; he was now grieving over that lost hope, uncertain where to look in the future. Having no relations with Parisian society, and seeing in the department of the Aube no other husband for Cécile than the youthful Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, he was asking himself whether by the power of gold he could surmount the animosities which the revolution of July had roused between the royalists who were faithful to their principles, and their conquerors. The happiness of his granddaughter seemed to him so doubtful if he delivered her into the hands of the proud and haughty Marquise de Cinq-Cygne that he decided in his own mind to trust to the friend of old age, Time. He hoped that his bitter enemy the marquise might die, and, in that case, he thought he could win the son through his grandfather, old d’Hauteserre, who

was then living at Cinq-Cygne and whom he knew to be accessible to the persuasions of money.

If this plan failed, and Cécile Beauvisage remained unmarried, he resolved as a last resource to consult his friend Gondreville, who would, he believed, find his Cécile a husband, after his heart and his ambition, among the dukes of the Empire.

*“Severine found her father seated on a wooden bench  
at the end of his terrace.”*









## IX.

## A STRANGER.

SÉVERINE found her father seated on a wooden bench at the end of his terrace, under a bower of lilacs then in bloom, and taking his coffee; for it was half-past five in the afternoon. She saw, by the pain on her father's face, that he had already heard the news. In fact, the old count had sent a valet to his friend, begging him to come to him.

Up to the present time, old Grévin had endeavored not to encourage his daughter's ambition too far; but now, in the midst of the contradictory reflections which the melancholy death of Charles Keller caused him, his secret escaped his lips.

"My dear child," he said to her, "I had formed the finest plans for your future. Cécile was to have been Vicomtesse Keller, for Charles, by my influence, would now have been elected deputy. Neither Gondreville nor his daughter Madame Keller would have refused Cécile's *dot* of sixty thousand francs a year, especially with the prospect of the hundred thousand more which she will some day have from you. You would have lived in Paris with your daughter, and played your part of mother-in-law in the upper regions of power."

Madame Beauvisage made a sign of satisfaction.

"But we are knocked down by the death of this charming young man, to whom the prince royal had already

given his friendship. Now this Simon Giguët, who has thrust himself upon the scene, is a fool, and the worst of all fools, for he thinks himself an eagle. You are, however, too intimate with the Giguëts and the Marion household not to put the utmost politeness into your refusal — but you must refuse him.”

“As usual, you and I are of the same opinion, father.”

“You can say that I have otherwise disposed of Cécile’s hand, and that will cut short all preposterous pretensions like that of Antonin Goulard. Little Vinet may offer himself, and he is preferable to the others who are smelling after the *dot*; he has talent, and shrewdness, and he belongs to the Chargebœufs by his mother; but he has too much character not to rule his wife, and he is young enough to make himself loved. You would perish between the two sentiments — for I know you by heart, my child.”

“I shall be much embarrassed this evening at the Marions’ to know what to say,” remarked Séverine.

“Well, then, my dear,” said her father, “send Madame Marion to me; I’ll talk to her.”

“I knew, father, that you were thinking of our future, but I had no idea you expected it to be so brilliant,” said Madame Beauvisage, taking the hands of the old man and kissing them.

“I have pondered the matter so deeply,” said Grévin, “that in 1831 I bought the Beauséant mansion in Paris, which you have probably seen.”

Madame de Beauvisage made a movement of surprise on hearing this secret, until then so carefully kept, but she did not interrupt her father.

"It will be my wedding present," he went on. "In 1832 I let it for seven years, to an Englishman for twenty-four thousand francs a year, — a pretty stroke of business; for it only cost me three hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, of which I thus recover nearly two hundred thousand. The lease ends in July of this year."

Séverine kissed her father on the forehead and on both cheeks. This last revelation so magnified her future that she was well-nigh dazzled.

"I shall advise my father," she said to herself, as she recrossed the bridge, "to give only the reversion of that property to his grandchildren, and let me have the life-interest in it. I have no idea of letting my daughter and son-in-law turn me out of doors; they must live with me."

At dessert, when the two women-servants were safely at their own dinner in the kitchen, and Madame Beauvisage was certain of not being overheard, she thought it advisable to give Cécile a little lecture.

"My daughter," she said, "behave this evening with propriety, like a well-bred girl; and from this day forth be more sedate. Do not chatter heedlessly, and never walk alone with Monsieur Giguët, or Monsieur Olivier Vinet, or the sub-prefect, or Monsieur Martener, — in fact, with any one, not even Achille Pigoult. You will not marry any of the young men of Arcis, or of the department. Your fate is to shine in Paris. Therefore I shall now give you charming dresses, to accustom you to elegance. We can easily find out where the Princesse de Cadignan and the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne get their things. I mean

that you shall cease to look provincial. You must practise the piano for three hours every day. I shall send for Monsieur Moïse from Troyes until I know what master I ought to get from Paris. Your talents must all be developed, for you have only one year more of girlhood before you. Now I have warned you, and I shall see how you behave this evening. You must manage to keep Simon at a distance, but without coquetting with him."

"Don't be uneasy, mamma; I intend to adore the *stranger*."

These words, which made Madame Beauvisage laugh, need some explanation.

"Ha! I have n't seen him yet," said Philéas, "but everybody is talking about him. When I want to know who he is, I shall send the corporal or Monsieur Groslier to ask him for his passport."

There is no little town in France where, at a given time, the drama or the comedy of the *stranger* is not played. Often the stranger is an adventurer who makes dupes and departs, carrying with him the reputation of a woman, or the money of a family. Oftener the stranger is a real stranger, whose life remains mysterious long enough for the town to busy itself curiously about his words and deeds.

Now the probable accession to power of Simon Giguët was not the only serious event that was happening in Arcis. For the last two days the attention of the little town had been focussed on a personage just arrived, who proved to be the first Unknown of the present generation. This *stranger* was at this moment the subject of conversation in every house-

hold in the place. He was the beam fallen from heaven into the city of the frogs.

The situation of Arcis-sur-Aube explains the effect which the arrival of a stranger was certain to produce. About eighteen miles from Troyes, on the high-road to Paris, opposite to a farm called "La Belle Étoile," a county road branches off from the main road, and leads to Arcis, crossing the vast plains where the Seine cuts a narrow green valley bordered with poplars, which stand out upon the whiteness of the chalk soil of Champagne. The main road from Arcis to Troyes is eighteen miles in length, and makes the arch of a bow, the extremities of which are Troyes and Arcis, so that the shortest route from Paris to Arcis is by the county road which turns off, as we have said, near the Belle Étoile. The Aube is navigable only from Arcis to its mouth. Therefore this town, standing eighteen miles from a high-road, and separated from Troyes by monotonous plains, is isolated more or less, and has but little commerce or transportation either by land or water. Arcis is, in fact, a town completely isolated, where no travellers pass, and is attached to Troyes and La Belle Étoile by stage-coaches only. All the inhabitants know each other; they even know the commercial travellers who come, now and then, on business from the large Parisian houses. Thus, as in all provincial towns in a like position, a stranger, if he stayed two days, would wag the tongues and excite the imaginations of the whole community without his name or his business being known.

Now, Arcis being still in a state of tranquillity three days before the morning when, by the will of the cre-

ator of so many histories, the present tale begins, there was seen to arrive by the county road a stranger, driving a handsome tilbury drawn by a valuable horse, and accompanied by a tiny groom, no bigger than my fist, mounted on a saddle-horse. The coach, connecting with the diligences to Troyes, had brought from La Belle Étoile three trunks coming from Paris, marked with no name, but belonging to this stranger, who took up his quarters at the Mulet inn. Every one in Arcis supposed, on the first evening, that this personage had come with the intention of buying the estate of Arcis ; and much was said in all households about the future owner of the château. The tilbury, the traveller, his horses, his servant, one and all appeared to belong to a man who had dropped upon Arcis from the highest social sphere.

The stranger, no doubt fatigued, did not show himself for a time ; perhaps he spent part of the day in arranging himself in the rooms he had chosen, announcing his intention of staying a certain time. He requested to see the stable where his horses were to be kept, showed himself very exacting, and insisted that they should be placed in stalls apart from those of the innkeeper's horses, and from those of guests who might come later. In consequence of such singular demands, the landlord of the hôtel du Mulet considered his guest to be an Englishman.

On the evening of the first day several attempts were made at the Mulet by inquisitive persons to satisfy their curiosity ; but no light whatever could be obtained from the little groom, who evaded all inquiries, not by refusals or by silence, but by sarcasms which seemed



to be beyond his years and to prove him a corrupt little mortal.

After making a careful toilet and dining at six o'clock, the stranger mounted a horse, and, followed by his groom, rode off along the road to Brienne, not returning till a very late hour to the Mulet. The landlord, his wife, and her maids had meantime gained no information from a careful examination of his trunks, and the articles about his rooms, as to the projects or the condition of their mysterious inmate.

On the stranger's return the mistress of the house carried up to him the book in which, according to police regulations, he was required to inscribe his name, rank, the object of his journey, and the place from which he came.

"I shall write nothing," he said to the mistress of the inn. "If any one questions you, you can say I refused; and you may send the sub-prefect to see me, for I have no passport. I dare say that many persons will make inquiries about me, madame, and you can tell them just what you like. I wish you to know nothing about me. If you worry me on this point, I shall go to the Hôtel de la Poste on the Place du Pont and remain there the fortnight I propose to spend here. I should be sorry for that, because I know that you are the sister of Gothard, one of the heroes of the Simeuse affair."

"Enough, monsieur," said the sister of the steward of Cinq-Cygne.

After such a beginning, the stranger kept the mistress of the house a whole hour and made her tell him all she knew of Arcis, of its fortunes, its interests,

and its functionaries. The next day he disappeared on horseback, followed by his tiger, returning at midnight.

We can now understand Mademoiselle Cécile's little joke, which Madame Beauvisage thought to be without foundation. Beauvisage and Cécile, surprised by the order of the day promulgated by Séverine, were enchanted. While his wife went to dress for Madame Marion's reception, the father listened to the many conjectures it was natural a girl should make in such a case. Then, fatigued with his day, he went to bed as soon as his wife and daughter had departed.

As may readily be supposed by those who know anything of country towns, a crowd of persons flocked to Madame Marion's that evening. The triumph of Giguet junior was thought to be a victory won against the Comte de Gondreville, and to insure forever the independence of Arcis in the matter of elections. The news of the death of poor Charles Keller was regarded as a judgment from heaven, intended to silence all rivalries.

Antonin Goulard, Frédéric Marest, Olivier Vinet, and Monsieur Martener, the authorities who, until then, had frequented this salon (the prevailing opinions of which did not seem to them contrary to the government created by the popular will in July, 1830), came as usual, possessed by curiosity to see what attitude the Beauvisage family would take under the circumstances.

The salon, restored to its usual condition, showed no signs of the meeting which appeared to have settled the destiny of Simon Giguet. By eight o'clock four

card-tables, each with four players, were under way. The smaller salon and the dining-room were full of people. Never, except on grand occasions, such as balls and fête-days, had Madame Marion seen such an influx at the door of her salon, forming as it were the tail of a comet.

"It is the dawn of power," said Olivier Vinet to the mistress of the house, showing her this spectacle, so gratifying to the heart of a person who delighted in receiving company.

"No one knows what there is in Simon," replied the mother. "We live in times when young men who persevere and are moral and upright can aspire to everything."

This answer was made, not so much to Vinet as to Madame Beauvisage, who had entered the room with her daughter and was now beginning to offer her congratulations on the event. In order to escape indirect appeals and pointed interpretations of careless words, Madame Beauvisage took a vacant place at a whist-table and devoted her mind to the winning of one hundred fishes. One hundred fishes, or counters, made fifty sous! When a player had lost that sum it was talked of in Arcis for a couple of days.

Cécile went to talk with Mademoiselle Mollot, one of her good friends, appearing to be seized with redoubled affection for her. Mademoiselle Mollot was the beauty of Arcis, just as Cécile was the heiress. Monsieur Mollot, clerk of the court, lived on the Grande-Place in a house constructed in the same manner as that of Beauvisage on the Place du Pont. Madame Mollot, forever seated at the window of her

salon on the ground-floor, was attacked (as the result of that situation) by intense, acute, insatiable curiosity, now become a chronic and inveterate disease. The moment a peasant entered the square from the road to Brienne she saw him, and watched to see what business could have brought him to Arcis; she had no peace of mind until that peasant was explained. She spent her life in judging the events, men, things, and households of Arcis.

The ambition of the house of Mollot, father, mother, and daughter, was to marry Ernestine (an only daughter) to Antonin Goulard. Consequently the refusal of the Beauvisage parents to entertain the proposals of the sub-prefect had tightened the bonds of friendship between the two families.

"There's an impatient man!" said Ernestine to Cécile, indicating Simon Giguët. "He wants to come and talk with us; but every one who comes in feels bound to congratulate him. I've heard him say fifty times already: 'It is, I think, less to me than to my father that this compliment of my fellow-citizens has been paid; but, in any case, pray believe that I shall be devoted not only to our general interests but to yours individually.' I can guess those words by the motion of his lips, and all the while he is looking at you with an air of martyrdom."

"Ernestine," replied Cécile, "don't leave me the whole evening; I don't want to listen to his proposals made under cover of 'alases!' and mingled with sighs."

"Don't you want to be the wife of a Keeper of the Seals?"

“ Ah! that’s all nonsense,” said Cécile, laughing.

“ But I assure you,” persisted Ernestine, “ that just before you came in Monsieur Godivet, the registrar, was declaring with enthusiasm that Simon would be Keeper of the Seals in three years.”

“ Do they count on the influence of the Comte de Gondreville?” asked the sub-prefect, coming up to the two girls and guessing that they were making fun of his friend Giguet.

“ Ah! Monsieur Antonin,” said the handsome Ernestine, “ you who promised my mother to find out all about the *stranger*, what have you heard about him?”

“ The events of to-day, Mademoiselle, are so much more important,” said Antonin, taking a seat beside Cécile, like a diplomat delighted to escape general attention by conversing with two girls. “ All my career as sub-prefect or prefect is at stake.”

“ What! I thought you allowed your friend Simon to be nominated unanimously.”

“ Simon is my friend, but the government is my master, and I expect to do my best to prevent Simon from being elected. And here comes Madame Mollot, who owes me her concurrence as the wife of a man whose functions attach him to the government.”

“ I am sure we ask nothing better than to be on your side,” replied the sheriff’s wife. “ Mollot has told me,” she continued in a low voice, “ what took place here to-day — it is pitiable! Only one man showed talent, and that was Achille Pigoult. Everybody agrees that he would make a fine orator in the Chamber; and therefore, though he has nothing, and my daughter has a *dot* of sixty thousand francs, not to

“speak of what, as an only child, she will inherit from us and also from her uncle at Mollot and from my aunt Lambert at Troyes, — well, I declare to you that if Monsieur Achille Pigoult did us the honor to ask her to wife, I should give her to him; yes, I should — provided always she liked him. But the silly little goose wants to marry as she pleases; it is Mademoiselle Beauvisage who puts such notions into her head.”

The sub-prefect received this double broadside like a man who knows he has thirty thousand francs a year, and expects a prefecture.

“Mademoiselle is right,” he said, looking at Cécile; “she is rich enough to make a marriage of love.”

“Don’t let us talk about marriage,” said Ernestine; “it saddens my poor dear Cécile, who was owing to me just now that in order not to be married for her money, but for herself, she should like an affair with some stranger who knew nothing of Arcis and her future expectations as Lady Croesus, and would spin her a romance to end in true love and a marriage.”

“That’s a very pretty idea!” cried Olivier Vinet, joining the group of young ladies in order to get away from the partisans of Simon, the idol of the day. “I always knew that Mademoiselle had as much sense as money.”

“And,” continued Ernestine, “she has selected for the hero of her romance —”

“Oh!” interrupted Madame Mollot, “an old man of fifty! — fie!”

“How do you know he is fifty?” asked Olivier Vinet, laughing.

“How?” replied Madame Mollot. “Why, this

morning I was so puzzled that I got out my opera-glass —”

“Bravo!” cried the superintendent of *ponts et chaussées*, who was paying court to the mother to obtain the daughter.

“And so,” continued Madame Mollet, “I was able to see him shaving; with such elegant razors! — mounted in gold, or silver-gilt!”

“Gold! gold, of course!” said Vinet. “When things are unknown they should always be imagined of the finest quality. Consequently I, not having seen this gentleman, am perfectly sure that he is at least a count.”

This speech created a laugh; and the laughing group excited the jealousy of a group of dowagers and the attention of a troop of men in black who surrounded Simon Giguët. As for the latter, he was chafing in despair at not being able to lay his fortune and his future at the feet of the rich Cécile.

“Yes,” continued Vinet, “a man distinguished for his birth, for his manners, his fortune, his equipages, — a lion, a dandy, a yellow-kid-glover!”

“Monsieur Olivier,” said Ernestine, “he drives the prettiest tilbury you ever saw.”

“What? Antonin, you never told me he had a tilbury when we were talking about that conspirator this morning. A tilbury! Why, that’s an extenuating circumstance; he can’t be a republican.”

“Mesdemoiselles, there is nothing that I will not do in the interests of your amusement,” said Antonin Goulard. “I will instantly proceed to ascertain if this individual is a count, and if he is, what kind of count.”

“You can make a report upon him,” said the superintendent of bridges.

“For the use of all future sub-prefects,” added Olivier Vinet.

“How can you do it?” asked Madame Mollot.

“Oh!” replied the sub-prefect, “ask Mademoiselle Beauvisage whom she would accept as her husband among all of us here present; she will not answer. Allow me the same discretion. Mesdemoiselles, restrain your anxiety; in ten minutes you shall know whether the Unknown is a count or a commercial traveller.”



## X.

## THE REVELATIONS OF AN OPERA-GLASS.

ANTONIN GOULARD left the little group of young ladies, in which, besides Cécile and Ernestine, were Mademoiselle Berton, daughter of the tax-collector, — an insignificant young person who played the part of satellite to Cécile, — and Mademoiselle Herbelot, sister of the second notary of Arcis, an old maid of thirty, soured, affected, and dressed like all old maids; for she wore, over a bombazine gown, an embroidered fichu, the corners of which, gathered to the front of the bodice, were knotted together after the well-known fashion under the Terror.

“Julien,” said the sub-prefect to his valet, who was waiting in the antechamber, “you who served six years at Gondreville ought to know how a count’s coronet is made.”

“Yes, monsieur; it has pearls on its nine points.”

“Very good. Go to the Mulet, and try to clap your eye on the tilbury of the gentleman who is stopping there, and then come and tell me what is painted on it. Do your business thoroughly, and bring me all the gossip of the inn. If you see the little groom, ask him at what hour to-morrow his master can receive the sub-prefect — in case you find the nine pearls. Don’t drink, don’t gossip yourself, and come back

quickly; and as soon as you get back let me know it by coming to the door of the salon."

"Yes, monsieur."

The Mulet inn, as we have already said, stands on the square, at the opposite corner to the garden wall of the Marion estate on the other side of the road leading to Brienne. Therefore the solution of the problem could be rapid. Antonin Goulard returned to his place by Cécile to await results.

"We talked so much about that stranger yesterday that I dreamed of him all night," said Madame Mollot.

"Ha! ha! do you still dream of unknown heroes, fair lady?" said Vinet.

"You are very impertinent; if I chose I could make you dream of me," she retorted. "So this morning when I rose —"

It may not be useless to say that Madame Mollot was considered a clever woman in Arcis; that is, she expressed herself fluently and abused that advantage. A Parisian, wandering by chance into these regions, like the Unknown, would have thought her excessively garrulous.

"— I was, naturally, making my toilet, and as I looked mechanically about me —"

"Through the window?" asked Antonin.

"Certainly; my dressing-room opens on the street. Now you know, of course, that Poupart has put the stranger into one of the rooms exactly opposite to mine —"

"One room, mamma!" interrupted Ernestine. "The count occupies three rooms! The little groom, dressed all in black, is in the first. They have made a

salon of the next, and the Unknown sleeps in the third."

"Then he has half the rooms in the inn," remarked Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"Well, young ladies, and what has that to do with his person?" said Madame Mollot, sharply, not pleased at the interruption. "I am talking of the man himself —"

"Don't interrupt the orator," put in Vinet.

"As I was stooping —"

"Seated?" asked Antonin.

"Madame was of course as she naturally would be, — making her toilet and looking at the Mulet," said Vinet.

In the provinces such jokes are prized, for people have so long said everything to each other that they have recourse at last to the sort of nonsense our fathers indulged in before the introduction of English hypocrisy, — one of those products against which custom-houses are powerless.

"Don't interrupt the orator," repeated Cécile Beauvisage to Vinet, with whom she exchanged a smile.

"My eyes involuntarily fell on the window of the room in which the stranger had slept the night before. I don't know what time he went to bed, although I was awake till past midnight; but I have the misfortune to be married to a man who snores fit to crack the planks and the rafters. If I fall asleep first, oh! I sleep so sound nothing can wake me; but if Mollot drops off first my night is ruined —"

"Don't you ever go off together?" said Achille Pigoult, joining the group. "I see you are talking of sleep."

"Hush, naughty boy!" replied Madame Mollot, graciously.

"Do you know what they mean?" whispered Cécile to Ernestine.

"At any rate, he was not in at one o'clock in the morning," continued Madame Mollot.

"Then he defrauded you! — came home without your knowing it!" said Achille Pigoult. "Ha! that man is sly indeed; he'll put us all in his pouch and sell us in the market-place."

"To whom?" asked Vinet.

"Oh! to a project! to an idea! to a system!" replied the notary, to whom Olivier smiled with a knowing air.

"Imagine my surprise," continued Madame Mollot, "when I saw a stuff, a material, of splendid magnificence, most beautiful! dazzling! I said to myself, 'That must be a dressing-gown of the spun-glass material I have sometimes seen in exhibitions of industrial products.' So I fetched my opera-glass to examine it. But, good gracious! what do you think I saw? Above the dressing-gown, where the head ought to have been, I saw an enormous mass, something like a knee — I can't tell you how my curiosity was excited."

"I can conceive it," said Antonin.

"No, you can *not* conceive it," said Madame Mollot; "for this knee —"

"Ah! I understand," cried Olivier Vinet, laughing; "the Unknown was also making his toilet, and you saw his two knees."

"No, no!" cried Madame Mollot; "you are putting incongruities into my mouth. The stranger was

standing up; he held a sponge in his hand above an immense basin, and — none of your jokes, Monsieur Olivier! — it was n't his knee, it was his head! He was washing his bald head; he has n't a spear of hair upon it."

"Impudent man!" said Antonin. "He certainly can't have come with ideas of marriage in that head. Here we must have hair in order to be married. That's essential."

"I am therefore right in saying that our Unknown visitor must be fifty years old. Nobody ever takes to a wig before that time of life. After a time, when his toilet was finished, he opened his window and looked out; and *then* he wore a splendid head of black hair. He turned his eyeglass full on me, — for by that time, I was in my balcony. Therefore, my dear Cécile, you see for yourself you can't take that man for the hero of your romance."

"Why not? Men of fifty are not to be despised, if they are counts," said Ernestine.

"Heavens! what has age to do with it?" said Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"Provided one gets a husband," added Vinet, whose cold maliciousness made him feared.

"Yes," replied the old maid, feeling the cut, "I should prefer a man of fifty, indulgent, kind, and considerate, to a young man without a heart, whose wit would bite every one, even his wife."

"This is all very well for conversation," retorted Vinet, "but in order to love the man of fifty and reject the other, it is necessary to have the opportunity to choose."

“Oh!” said Madame Mollot, in order to stop this passage at arms between the old maid and Vinet, who always went too far, “when a woman has had experience of life she knows that a husband of fifty or one of twenty-five is absolutely the same thing if she merely respects him. The important things in marriage are the benefits to be derived from it. If Mademoiselle Beauvisage wants to go to Paris and shine there — and in her place I should certainly feel so — she ought not to take a husband in Arcis. If I had the fortune she will have, I should give my hand to a count, to a man who would put me in a high social position, and I should n’t ask to see the certificate of his birth.”

“It would satisfy you to see his toilet,” whispered Vinet in her ear.

“But the king makes counts,” said Madame Marion, who had now joined the group and was surveying the bevy of young ladies.

“Ah! madame,” remarked Vinet, “but some young girls prefer their counts already made.”

“Well, Monsieur Antonin,” said Cécile, laughing at Vinet’s sarcasm. “Your ten minutes have expired, and you haven’t told us whether the Unknown is a count or not.”

“I shall keep my promise,” replied the sub-prefect, perceiving at that moment the head of his valet in the doorway; and again he left his place beside Cécile.

“You are talking of the stranger,” said Madame Marion. “Is anything really known about him?”

“No, madame,” replied Achille Pigoult; “but he is, without knowing it, like the clown of a circus, the centre of the eyes of the two thousand inhabitants of

this town. I know one thing about him," added the little notary.

"Oh, tell us, Monsieur Achille!" cried Ernestine, eagerly.

"His tiger's name is Paradise!"

"Paradise!" echoed every one included in the little circle.

"Can a man be called Paradise?" asked Madame Herbelot, who had joined her sister-in-law.

"It tends to prove," continued the notary, "that the master is an angel; for when his tiger follows him — you understand."

"It is the road of Paradise! very good, that," said Madame Marion, anxious to flatter Achille Pigoult in the interests of her nephew.

"Monsieur," said Antonin's valet in the dining-room, "the tilbury has a coat of arms —"

"Coat of arms!"

"Yes, and droll enough they are! There's a coronet with nine points and pearls —"

"Then he's a count!"

"And a monster with wings, flying like a postilion who has dropped something. And here is what is written on the belt," added the man, taking a paper from his pocket. "Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's lady's maid, who came in a carriage" (the Cinq-Cygne carriage before the door of the Mulet!) "to bring a letter to the gentleman, wrote it down for me."

"Give it to me."

The sub-prefect read the words: *Quo me trahit fortuna.*

Though he was not strong enough in French blazon to know the house that bore that device, Antonin felt sure that the Cinq-Cygnés would not send their chariot, nor the Princesse de Cadignan a missive by her maid, except to a person of the highest nobility.

"Ha! so you know the maid of the Princesse de Cadignan! happy man!" said Antonin.

Julien, a young countryman, after serving six months in the household of the Comte de Gondreville, had entered the service of the sub-prefect, who wanted a servant of the *right style*.

"But, monsieur, Anicette is my father's god-daughter. Papa, who wanted to do well by the girl, whose father was dead, sent her to a dressmaker in Paris because my mother could not endure her."

"Is she pretty?"

"Rather; the proof is that she got into trouble in Paris; but finally, as she has talent and can make gowns and dress hair, she got a place with the princess."

"What did she tell you about Cinq-Cygne? Is there much company?"

"A great deal, monsieur. There's the princess and Monsieur d'Arthéz, the Duc de Maufrigneuse and the duchess and the young marquis. In fact the château is full. They expect Monseigneur the Bishop of Troyes to-night."

"Monseigneur Troubert! I should like to know how long he is going to stay."

"Anicette thinks for some time; and she believes he is coming to meet the gentleman who is now at the Mulet. They expect more company. The coachman



told me they were talking a great deal about the election. Monsieur le président Michu is expected in a few days."

"Try to bring that lady's maid into town on pretence of shopping. Have you any designs upon her?"

"If she has any savings I don't know but what I might. She is a sly one, though."

"Tell her to come and see you at the sub-prefecture."

"Yes, monsieur. I'll go and tell her now."

"Don't say anything about me, or she might not come."

"Ah! monsieur; have n't I served at Gondreville?"

"You don't know why they sent that message from Cinq-Cygne at this hour, do you? It is half-past nine o'clock."

"It must have been something pressing. The gentleman had only just returned from Gondreville."

"Gondreville! — has he been to Gondreville?"

"He dined there, monsieur. If you went to the Mulet you'd laugh! The little tiger is, saving your presence, as drunk as a fiddler. He drank such a lot of champagne in the servants' hall that he can't stand on his legs; they have been filling him for fun."

"And the count?"

"The count had gone to bed; but as soon as he received the letter he got up. He is now dressing himself; and they are putting the horse in the tilbury. The count is to spend the night at Cinq-Cygne."

"He must be some great personage."

"Oh, yes, monsieur; for Gothard, the steward of Cinq-Cygne, came this morning to see his brother-in-law Poupart, and warned him to be very discreet about the gentleman and to serve him like a king."

“Vinet must be right,” thought the sub-prefect. “Can there be some cabal on foot?”

“It was Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse who sent Gothard to the Mulet. Poupart came to the meeting here this morning only because the gentleman wished him to do so; if he had sent him to Paris, he’d go. Gothard told Poupart to keep silent about the gentleman, and to fool all inquisitive people.”

“If you can get Anicette here, don’t fail to let me know,” said Antonin.

“But I could see her at Cinq-Cygne if monsieur would send me to his house at Val-Preux.”

“That’s an idea. You might profit by the chariot to get there. But what reason could you give to the little groom?”

“He’s a madcap, that boy, monsieur. Would you believe it, drunk as he is, he has just mounted his master’s thoroughbred, a horse that can do twenty miles an hour, and started for Troyes with a letter in order that it may reach Paris to-morrow! And only nine years and a half old! What will he be at twenty?”

The sub-prefect listened mechanically to these remarks. Julien gossiped on, his master listening, absorbed in thought about the stranger.

“Wait here,” he said to the man as he turned with slow steps to re-enter the salon. “What a mess!” he thought to himself, — “a man who dines at Gondreville and spends the night at Cinq-Cygne! Mysteries indeed!”

“Well?” cried the circle around Mademoiselle Beau-visage as soon as he reappeared.

"He is a count, and *vieille roche*, I answer for it."

"Oh! how I should like to see him!" cried Cécile.

"Mademoiselle," said Antonin, smiling and looking maliciously at Madame Mollot, "he is tall and well-made and does not wear a wig. His little groom was as drunk as the twenty-four cantons; they filled him with champagne at Gondreville and that little scamp, only nine years old, answered my man Julien, who asked him about his master's wig, with all the assumption of an old valet: 'My master! wear a wig! — if he did I'd leave him. He dyes his hair and that's bad enough.'"

"Your opera-glass magnifies," said Achille Pigoult to Madame Mollot, who laughed.

"Well, the tiger of the handsome count, drunk as he is, is now riding to Troyes to post a letter, and he'll get there, as they say, in five-quarters of an hour."

"I'd like to have that tiger," said Vinet.

"If the count dined at Gondreville we shall soon know all about him," remarked Cécile; "for my grandpapa is going there to-morrow morning."

"What will strike you as very strange," said Antonin Goulard, "is that the party at Cinq-Cygne have just sent Mademoiselle Anicette, the maid of the Princesse de Cadignan, in the Cinq-Cygne carriage, with a note to the stranger, and he is going now to pass the night there."

"*Ah ça!*" said Olivier Vinet, "then he is not a man; he's a devil, a phoenix, he will poculate —"

“ Ah, fie! monsieur,” said Madame Mollet, “ you use words that are really — ”

“ ‘ Poculate ’ is a word of the highest latinity, madame,” replied Vinet, gravely. “ So, as I said, he will poculate with Louis Philippe in the morning, and banquet at Holy-Rood with Charles the Tenth at night. There is but one reason that allows a decent man to go to both camps — from Montague to Capulet! Ha, ha! I know who that stranger is. He’s — ”

“ The president of a railway from Paris to Lyons, or Paris to Dijon, or from Montereau to Troyes.”

“ That’s true,” said Antonin. “ You have it. There’s nothing but speculation that is welcomed everywhere.”

“ Yes, just see how great names, great families, the old and the new peerage are rushing hot-foot into enterprises and partnerships,” said Achille Pigoult.

“ Franks attract the Franks,” remarked Olivier Vinet, without a smile.

“ You are not an *olive-branch* of peace,” said Madame Mollet, laughing.

“ But is it not demoralizing to see such names as Verneuil, Maufrigneuse, and Héróville side by side with those of du Tillet and Nucingen in the Bourse speculations? ”

“ Our great Unknown is undoubtedly an embryo railway,” said Olivier Vinet.

“ Well, to-morrow all Arcis will be upside-down about it,” said Achille Pigoult. “ I shall call upon the Unknown and ask him to make me notary of the affair. There’ll be two thousand deeds to draw, at the least.”

“Our romance is turning into a locomotive,” said Ernestine to Cécile.

“A count with a railway is all the more marriageable,” remarked Achille Pigault. “But who knows whether he is a bachelor?”

“Oh! I shall know that to-morrow from grand-papa,” cried Cécile, with pretended enthusiasm.

“What a jest!” said Madame Mollet. “You can’t really mean, my little Cécile, that you are thinking of that stranger?”

“But the husband is always the stranger,” interposed Olivier Vinet, making a sign to Mademoiselle Beauvisage which she fully understood.

“Why should n’t I think of him?” asked Cécile; “that is n’t compromising. Besides, he is, so these gentlemen say, either some great speculator, or some great seigneur, and either would suit me. I love Paris; and I want a house, a carriage, an opera-box, etc., in Paris.”

“That’s right,” said Vinet. “When people dream, they need n’t refuse themselves anything. If I had the pleasure of being your brother I should marry you to the young Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, who seems to me a lively young scamp who will make the money dance, and will laugh at his mother’s prejudices against the actors in the famous Simeuse melodrama.”

“It would be easier for you to make yourself prime-minister,” said Madame Marion. “There will never be any alliance between the granddaughter of Grévin and the Cinq-Cygnés.”

“Romeo came within an ace of marrying Juliet,”

remarked Achille Pigoult, “ and Mademoiselle is more beautiful than — ”

“ Oh ! if you are going to quote operas and opera beauties ! ” said Herbelot the notary, naïvely, having finished his game of whist.

“ My legal brother,” said Achille Pigoult, “ is not very strong on the history of the middle ages.”

“ Come, Malvina ! ” said the stout notary to his wife, making no reply to his young associate.

“ Tell me, Monsieur Antonin,” said Cécile to the sub-prefect, “ you spoke of Anicette, the maid of the Princesse de Cadignan ; do you know her ? ”

“ No, but Julien does ; she is the goddaughter of his father, and they are good friends together.”

“ Then try, through Julien, to get her to live with us. Mamma would n’t consider wages.”

“ Mademoiselle, to hear is to obey, as they say to despots in Asia,” replied the sub-prefect. “ Just see to what lengths I will go in order to serve you.”

And he left the room to give Julien orders to go with Anicette in the chariot and coax her away from the princess at any price.

## XI.

## IN WHICH THE CANDIDATE BEGINS TO LOSE VOTES.

AT this moment Simon Giguët, who had got through his bowing and scraping to all the influential men of Arcis, and who regarded himself as sure of his election, joined the circle around Cécile and Mademoiselle Mollot. The evening was far advanced. Ten o'clock had struck. After an enormous consumption of cakes, orgeat, punch, lemonade, and various syrups, those who had come that evening solely for political reasons and who were not accustomed to Madame Marion's floors, to them aristocratic, departed, — all the more willingly, because they were unaccustomed to sitting up so late. The evening then began to take on its usual air of intimacy. Simon Giguët hoped that he could now exchange a few words with Cécile, and he looked at her like a conqueror. The look displeased her.

"My dear fellow," said Antonin to Simon, observing on his friend's face the glory of success, "you come at a moment when the noses of all the young men in Arcis are put out of joint."

"Very much so," said Ernestine, whom Cécile had nudged with her elbow. "We are distracted, Cécile and I, about the great Unknown, and we are quarrelling for him."

"But," said Cécile, "he is no longer unknown; he is a count."

"Some adventurer!" replied Simon Giguet, with an air of contempt.

"Will you say that, Monsieur Simon," answered Cécile, feeling piqued, "of a man to whom the Princesse de Cadignan has just sent her servants, who dined at Gondreville to-day, and is to spend this evening with the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne?"

This was said sharply, and in so hard a tone that Simon was disconcerted.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said Olivier Vinet, "if we said to each other's faces what we all say behind our backs, social life would n't be possible. The pleasures of society, especially in the provinces, are to slander and backbite our neighbors."

"Monsieur Simon is jealous of your enthusiasm for the mysterious count," said Ernestine.

"It seems to me," said Cécile, "that Monsieur Simon has no right to be jealous of my affections."

After which remark, uttered in a way to dumfound Simon, Cécile rose; the others made way for her and she went to her mother, who was just finishing her rubber of whist.

"My dearest!" cried Madame Marion, hurrying after the heiress, "I think you are rather hard on my poor Simon."

"What has she done, my dear little kitten?" asked Madame Beauvisage.

"Mamma, Monsieur Simon called my great Unknown an adventurer!"

Simon had followed his aunt and was now beside



the card-table. The four persons whose interests were concerned were thus in the middle of the salon, — Cécile and her mother on one side of the table, Madame Marion and her nephew on the other.

"Really, madame," said Simon Giguet, "there must be a strong desire to find fault and to quarrel with me simply because I happened to say that a gentleman whom all Arcis is talking about and who stops at the Mulet —"

"Do you think he has come here to put himself in competition with you?" said Madame Beauvisage jestingly.

"I should be very indignant with him certainly if he were to cause the slightest misunderstanding between Mademoiselle Cécile and myself," said the candidate, with a supplicating look at the young girl.

"You gave your opinion, monsieur, in a decisive manner which proves that you are very despotic," she replied; "but you are right; if you wish to be a minister you ought to be decisive."

Here Madame Marion took Madame Beauvisage by the arm and led her to a sofa. Cécile, finding herself alone, returned to her former seat to avoid hearing Simon's answer to her speech, and the candidate was left standing rather foolishly before the table, where he mechanically played with the counters.

"My dear friend," said Madame Marion in a low voice to Madame Beauvisage, "you see that nothing can now hinder my nephew's election."

"I am delighted both for your sake and for the Chamber of Deputies," said Séverine.

"My nephew is certain to go far, my dear; and I'll tell you why: his own fortune, that which his father will leave him and mine, will amount altogether to some thirty thousand francs a year. When a man is a deputy and has a fortune like that, he can aspire to anything."

"Madame, he has our utmost admiration and our most earnest wishes for the success of his political career; but — "

"I am not asking for an answer," said Madame Marion, hastily interrupting her friend. "I only beg you to reflect on the following suggestions: Do our children suit each other? Can we marry them? We should then live in Paris during the sessions; and who knows if the deputy of Arcis may not be settled there permanently in some fine place in the magistracy? Look at Monsieur Vinet of Provins, how he has made his way. People blamed Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf for marrying him; yet she will soon be wife of the Keeper of the Seals; Monsieur Vinet can be peer of France whenever he pleases."

"Madame, I have not the power to marry my daughter according to my own tastes. In the first place, her father and I leave her absolutely free to choose for herself. If she wanted to marry the 'great Unknown' and we found that the match was suitable, we should give our consent. Besides this, Cécile is wholly dependent on her grandfather, who intends to give her on her marriage the Hôtel de Beauséant in Paris, which he purchased for us six years ago; the value of which is now rated at eight hundred thousand francs. It is one of the finest houses in the faubourg

Saint-Germain. Moreover, he intends to add two hundred thousand francs for the cost of fitting it up. A grandfather who behaves in this way, and who can influence my mother-in-law to make a few sacrifices for her granddaughter in expectation of a suitable marriage, has a right to advise — ”

“Certainly,” said Madame Marion, stupefied by this confidence, which made the marriage of her nephew and Cécile extremely difficult.

“Even if Cécile had nothing to expect from her grandfather Grévin,” continued Madame Beauvisage, “she would not marry without first consulting him. If you have any proposals to make, go and see my father.”

“Very good; I will go,” said Madame Marion.

Madame Beauvisage made a sign to Cécile, and together they left the salon.

The next day Antonin and Frédéric Marest found themselves, according to their usual custom, with Monsieur Martener and Olivier, beneath the lindens of the Avenue of Sighs, smoking their cigars and walking up and down. This daily promenade is one of the petty pleasures of government officials in the provinces when they happen to be on good terms with one another.

After they had made a few turns, Simon Giguet came up and joined them saying to the sub-prefect with a mysterious air:—

“You ought to be faithful to an old comrade who wishes to get you the rosette of an officer and a prefecture.”

“You are beginning your political career betimes,”

said Antonin, laughing. "You are trying to corrupt me, rabid puritan!"

"Will you support me?"

"My dear fellow, you know very well that Bar-sur-Aube votes here. Who can guarantee a majority under such circumstances? My colleague of Bar-sur-Aube would complain of me if I did not unite my efforts with his in support of the government. Your promise is conditional; whereas my dismissal would be certain."

"But I have no competitors."

"You think so," said Antonin, "but some one is sure to turn up; you may rely on that."

"Why does n't my aunt come, when she knows I am on a gridiron!" exclaimed Giguët, suddenly. "These three hours are like three years!"

His secret had escaped him and he now admitted to his friend that Madame Marion had gone on his behalf to old Grévin with a formal proposal for Cécile's hand.

The pair had now reached the Brienne road opposite to the Mulet hostelry. While the lawyer looked down the street towards the bridge his aunt would have to cross, the sub-prefect examined the gullies made by the rain in the open square. Arcis is not paved. The plains of Champagne furnish no material fit for building, nor even pebbles large enough for cobble-stone pavements. One or two streets and a few detached places are imperfectly macadamized and that is saying enough to describe their condition after a rain. The sub-prefect gave himself an appearance of occupation by apparently exercising his thoughts on this

important object; but he lost not a single expression of suffering on the anxious face of his companion.

At this moment, the stranger was returning from the Château de Cinq-Cygne, where he had apparently passed the night. Goulard resolved to clear up, himself, the mystery wrapped about the Unknown, who was physically enveloped in an overcoat of thick cloth called a *paletot*, then the fashion. A mantle, thrown across his knees for a covering, hid the lower half of his body, while an enormous muffler of red cashmere covered his neck and head to the eyes. His hat, jauntily tipped to one side, was, nevertheless, not ridiculous. Never was a mystery more mysteriously bundled up and swathed.

"Look out!" cried the tiger, who preceded the tilbury on horseback. "Open, papa Poupart, open!" he screamed in his shrill little voice.

The three servants of the inn ran out, and the tilbury drove in without any one being able to see a single feature of the stranger's face. The sub-prefect followed the tilbury into the courtyard, and went to the door of the inn.

"Madame Poupart," said Antonin, "will you ask Monsieur — Monsieur —"

"I don't know his name," said Gothard's sister.

"You do wrong! The rules of the police are strict, and Monsieur Groslier does n't trifle, like some commissaries of police."

"Innkeepers are never to blame about election-time," remarked the little tiger, getting off his horse.

"I'll repeat that to Vinet," thought the sub-prefect.

"Go and ask your master if he can receive the sub-prefect of Arcis."

Presently Paradise returned.

"Monsieur begs Monsieur the sub-prefect to come up; he will be delighted to see him."

"My lad," said Olivier Vinet, who with the two other functionaries had joined the sub-prefect before the inn, "how much does your master give a year for a boy of your cut and wits?"

"Give, monsieur! What do you take me for? Monsieur le comte lets himself be milked, and I'm content."

"That boy was raised in a good school!" said Frédéric Marest.

"The highest school, monsieur," said the urchin, amazing the four friends with his perfect self-possession.

"What a Figaro!" cried Vinet.

"Mustn't lower one's price," said the infant. "My master calls me a little Robert-Macaire, and since we have learned how to invest our money we are Figaro, plus a savings bank."

"How much do you earn?"

"Oh! some races I make two or three thousand francs — and without selling my master, monsieur."

"Sublime infant!" said Vinet; "he knows the turf."

"Yes, and all gentlemen riders," said the child, sticking out his tongue at Vinet.

Antonin Goulard, ushered by the landlord into a room which had been turned into a salon, felt himself instantly under the focus of an eyeglass held in the most impertinent manner by the stranger.

"Monsieur," said the sub-prefect with a certain official hauteur, "I have just learned from the wife of the innkeeper that you refuse to conform to the ordinances of the police, and as I do not doubt that you are a person of distinction, I have come myself —"

"Is your name Goulard?" demanded the stranger in a high voice.

"I am the sub-prefect, monsieur," replied Antonin Goulard.

"Your father belonged to the Simeuse family?"

"And I, monsieur, belong to the government; that is how times differ."

"You have a servant named Julien, who has tried to entice the Princesse de Cadignan's maid away from her?"

"Monsieur, I do not allow any one to speak to me in this manner," said Goulard; "you misunderstand my character."

"And you want to know about mine!" returned the Unknown. "Well, I will now make myself known. You can write in the landlord's book: 'Impertinent fellow. Direct from Paris. Age doubtful. Travelling for pleasure.' It would be rather a novelty in France to imitate England and let people come and go as they please, without tormenting them at every turn for 'papers.' I have no passport; now, what will you do to me?"

"The *procureur-du-roi* is walking up and down there under the lindens," said the sub-prefect.

"Monsieur Marest! Wish him good-morning from me."

"But who are you?"

"Whatever you wish me to be, my dear Monsieur Goulard," said the stranger. "You alone shall decide *what* I am to be in this department. Give me some advice on that head. Here, read that."

And the stranger handed the sub-prefect the following letter: —

(*Confidential.*)

PREFECTURE OF THE AUBE.

MONSIEUR THE SUB-PREFECT, — You will consult with the bearer of this letter as to the election at Arcis, and you will conform to all the suggestions and requests he may make to you. I request you to conduct this matter with the utmost discretion, and to treat the bearer with all the respect that is due to his station.

The letter was written and signed by the prefect of the Aube.

"You have been talking prose without knowing it," said the Unknown, taking back the letter.

Antonin Goulard, already struck with the aristocratic tone and manners of this personage, became respectful.

"How was that, monsieur?" he asked.

"By endeavoring to entice Anicette. She told us of the attempts of your man Julien to corrupt her. But my little tiger, Paradise, got the better of him, and he ended by admitting that you wanted to put Anicette into the service of one of the richest families in Arcis. Now, as the richest family in Arcis is the Beauvisage family I make no doubt it is Mademoiselle Cécile who covets this treasure."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very good; then Anicette shall enter the Beauvisage household at once."



He whistled. Paradise presented himself so rapidly that his master said: "You were listening!"

"In spite of myself, Monsieur le comte; these partitions are nothing but paper. But if Monsieur le comte prefers, I will move upstairs."

"No, you can listen; it is your perquisite. It is for me to speak low when I don't want you to know my affairs. Go back to Cinq-Cygne, and give this gold piece to that little Anicette from me. Julien shall have the credit of enticing her away," he continued, addressing Goulard. "That bit of gold will inform her that she is to follow him. Anicette may be useful to the success of our candidate."

"Anicette?"

"Monsieur, it is now thirty-two years since lady's-maids have served my purposes. I had my first adventure at the age of thirteen, like the regent, the great-great-grandfather of our present King. Do you know the fortune of this Mademoiselle Beauvisage?"

"I can't help knowing it, monsieur, for yesterday at Madame Marion's, Madame Beauvisage said openly that Monsieur Grévin, Cécile's grandfather, would give his granddaughter the hôtel de Beauséant in Paris and two hundred thousand francs for a wedding present."

The stranger's eyes expressed no surprise. He seemed to consider the fortune rather paltry.

"Do you know Arcis well?" he asked of Goulard.

"I am the sub-prefect and I was born here."

"What is the best way to balk curiosity?"

"By satisfying it. For instance, Monsieur le Comte has a baptismal name; let him register that with the title of count."

"Very good; Comte Maxime."

"And if monsieur will assume the position of a railway official, Arcis will be content; it will amuse itself by floating that stick at least for a fortnight."

"No, I prefer to be concerned in irrigation; it is less common. I have come down to survey the wastelands of Champagne in order to reclaim them. That will be, my good Monsieur Goulard, a reason for inviting me to dine with you to-morrow to meet the mayor and his family; I wish to see them, and study them."

"I shall be only too happy to receive you," said the sub-prefect; "but I must ask your indulgence for the deficiencies of my little household."

"If I succeed in managing the election of Arcis according to the wishes of those who have sent me here, you, my dear friend, will be made a prefect. Here, read these;" and he held out two letters to his visitor.

"Very good, Monsieur le comte," said Antonin, returning them.

"Make a list of all the votes on which the ministry may count. Above all, let no one suspect that you and I understand each other. I am a speculator in land, and I don't care a fig for elections."

"I will send the commissary of police to force you to inscribe your name on Poupart's register."

"So do. Adieu, monsieur. Heavens! what a region this is," said the count in a loud voice; "one can't take a step without having the community, sub-prefect and all, on one's back."

"You will have to answer to the commissary of

police, monsieur," said Antonin, in an equally loud tone.

And for the next twenty minutes Madame Mollot talked of the altercation that took place between the sub-prefect and the stranger.

"Well, what wood is the beam that has plumped into our bog made of?" said Olivier Vinet when Antonin Goulard rejoined them on leaving the Mulet.

"He is a Comte Maxime who is here to study the geological system of Champagne, with a view to finding mineral waters," replied the sub-prefect, with an easy manner.

"Say a speculator," said Olivier.

"Does he expect to get the natives to lay out capital?" asked Monsieur Martener.

"I doubt if our royalists will go into that kind of mining," remarked Vinet, laughing.

"What should you think from the air and gestures of Madame Marion?" said the sub-prefect turning off the subject by pointing to Madame Marion and Simon, who were deep in conversation.

Simon had gone toward the bridge to meet his aunt, and was now walking with her up the square.

"If he was accepted one word would suffice," said the shrewd Olivier.

"Well?" said all the officials when Simon came to them under the lindens.

"My aunt thinks the matter very hopeful," replied Simon. "Madame Beauvisage and old Grévin, who has just gone to Gondreville, were not at all surprised at my proposals; they talked of our respective fortunes, and said they wished to leave Cécile perfectly

free to make her choice. Besides which, Madame Beauvisage said that, as for herself, she saw no objection to an alliance by which she should feel herself honored; although she postponed all answer until after my election, and possibly my first appearance in the Chamber. Old Grévin said he should consult the Comte de Gondreville, without whose advice he never took any important step."

"All of which means," said Goulard, point-blank, "that you will never marry Cécile, my old fellow."

"Why not?" said Giguët, ironically.

"My dear friend, Madame Beauvisage and her daughter spend four evenings every week in the salon of your aunt; your aunt is the most distinguished woman in Arcis; and she is, though twenty years the elder, an object of envy to Madame Beauvisage; don't you see, therefore, that they wished to wrap up their refusal in certain civilities?"

"Not to say entire yes or no in such a case," said Vinet, "is to say *no*, with due regard to the intimacy of the two families. Though Madame Beauvisage has the largest fortune in Arcis, Madame Marion is the most esteemed woman in the place; for, with the exception of our chief-justice's wife, who sees no one now, she is the only woman who knows how to hold a salon; she is the queen of Arcis. Madame Beauvisage has tried to make her refusal polite, that's all."

"I think that old Grévin was fooling your mother," said Frédéric Marest.

"Yesterday you attacked the Comte de Gondreville, you insulted and grievously affronted him, and he is to be consulted about your marriage to Cécile!"

"Père Grévin is a sly old dog," said Vinet.

"Madame Beauvisage is very ambitious," pursued Antonin Goulard. "She knows very well her daughter is to have two millions; she means to be mother-in-law of a minister or an ambassador, in order to play the great lady in Paris."

"Well, why not?" said Simon Giguet.

"I wish you may get it!" replied the sub-prefect looking at Vinet, with whom he went off into a hearty laugh as soon as they were out of hearing. "He won't even be deputy," added Antonin, addressing Vinet; "the ministry have other views. You will find a letter from your father when you get home, enjoining you to make sure of the votes of all the persons in your department, and see that they go for the ministerial candidate. Your own promotion depends on this; and he requests you to be very discreet."

"But who is the candidate for whom our ushers and sheriffs and clerks, and solicitors and notaries are to vote?" asked Vinet.

"The one I shall name to you."

"How do you know my father has written to me, and what he wrote?"

"The stranger told me —"

"The man after water?"

"My dear Vinet, you and I are not to know; we must treat him as a stranger. He saw your father at Provins as he came through. Just now this same man gave me a note from the prefect instructing me to follow in every particular the instructions of Comte Maxime about this election. I knew very well I should have a battle to fight! Come and dine some-

where and we will get out our batteries. You are to be *procureur-du-roi* at Mantes, and I am to be prefect; but we must *seem* to have nothing to do with the election, for don't you see, we are between the hammer and the anvil. Simon is the candidate of a party which wants to overturn the present ministry and may succeed; but for men as intelligent as you and I there is but one course to take."

"What is that?"

"To serve those who make and unmake ministers. A letter was shown to me from one of those personages who represent the stable and immovable thought of the State."

Before going farther, it is necessary to explain who this Unknown person was, and what his purpose was in coming to Champagne.

## XII.

## THE SALON OF MADAME D'ESPARD.

ABOUT two months before the nomination of Simon Giguet, at eleven o'clock one evening, in a mansion of the faubourg Saint-Honoré belonging to the Marquise d'Espard, while tea was being served the Chevalier d'Espard, brother-in-law to the marquise, put down his tea-cup, and, looking round the circle, remarked : —

“Maxime was very melancholy to-night, — did n't you think so?”

“Yes,” replied Rastignac, “but his sadness is easily accounted for. He is forty-eight years old; at that age a man makes no new friends, and now that we have buried de Marsay, Maxime has lost the only man capable of understanding him, of being useful to him, and of using him.”

“He probably has pressing debts. Could n't you put him in the way of paying them?” said the marquise to Rastignac.

At this period Rastignac was, for the second time, in the ministry; he had just been made count almost against his will. His father-in-law, the Baron de Nucingen, was peer of France, his younger brother a bishop, the Comte de Roche-Hugon, his brother-in-law, was an ambassador, and he himself was thought to be indispensable in all future combinations of the ministry.

"You always forget, my dear marquise," replied Rastignac, "that our government exchanges its silver for gold only; it pays no heed to men."

"Is Maxime a man who would blow out his brains?" inquired the banker du Tillet.

"Ha! you wish I were; we should be quits then," said Comte Maxime de Trailles, whom everybody supposed to have left the house.

The count rose suddenly, like an apparition, from the depths of an arm-chair placed exactly behind that of the Chevalier d'Espard.

Every one present laughed.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" said the young Comtesse de Rastignac, whom the marquise had asked to do the honors in her place.

"Gladly," replied the count, standing before the fireplace.

This man, the prince of fashionable scoundrels, had managed to maintain himself until now in the high and mighty position of a dandy in Paris, then called *Gants Jaunes* (lemon-kid-glovers), and since, "lions." It is useless to relate the history of his youth, full of questionable adventures, with now and then some horrible drama, in which he had always known how to save appearances. To this man women were never anything else than a means; he believed no more in their griefs than he did in their joys; he regarded them, like the late de Marsay, as naughty children. After squandering his own fortune, he had spent that of a famous courtesan, La Belle Hollandaise, the mother of Esther Gobseck. He had caused the misery of Madame Restaud, sister of Madame Delphine de



Nucingen, the mother of the young Comtesse de Rastignac.

The world of Paris offers many unimaginable situations. The Baronne de Nucingen was at this moment in Madame d'Espard's salon in presence of the author of all her sister's misery, in presence of a murderer who killed only the happiness of women. That, perhaps, was the reason why he was there. Madame de Nucingen had dined at Madame d'Espard's with her daughter, married a few months earlier to the Comte de Rastignac, who had begun his political career by occupying the post of under-secretary of state in the famous ministry of the late de Marsay, the only real statesman produced by the Revolution of July.

Comte Maxime de Trailles alone knew how many disasters he had caused; but he had always taken care to shelter himself from blame by scrupulously obeying the laws of the *Man-Code*. Though he had squandered in the course of his life more money than the four galleys of France could have stolen in the same time, he had kept clear of justice. Never had he lacked in honor; his gambling debts were paid scrupulously. An admirable player, his partners were chiefly the great seigneurs, ministers, and ambassadors. He dined habitually with all the members of the diplomatic body. He fought duels, and had killed two or three men in his life; in fact, he had half murdered them, for his coolness and self-possession were unparalleled. No young man could compare with him in dress, in the distinction of his manners, the elegance of his witty speech, the grace of his easy carriage, — in short, what was called in those days “the

grand air." In his capacity of page to the Emperor, trained from the age of twelve in the art of riding, he was held to be the skilfulest of horsemen. Having always fine horses in his stable, he raised some, and ruled the fashion in equestrianism. No man could stand a supper of young bloods better than he; he drank more than the best-trained toper, but he came out fresh and cool, and ready to begin again as if orgy were his element. Maxime, one of those despised men who know how to repress the contempt they inspire by the insolence of their attitude and the fear they cause, never deceived himself as to his actual position. Hence his real strength. Strong men are always their own critics.

Under the Restoration he had made the most of his former condition of page to the Emperor. He attributed to his pretended Bonapartist opinions the rebuffs he met with from the different ministers when he asked for an office under the Bourbons; for, in spite of his connections, his birth, and his dangerous aptitudes, he never obtained anything. After the failure of these attempts he entered the secret cabal which led in time to the fall of the Elder branch.

When the Younger branch, preceded by the Parisian populace, had trodden down the Elder branch and was seated on the throne, Maxime reproduced his attachment to Napoleon, for whom he cared as much as for his first love. He then did great services to the newcomers, who soon found the payment for them onerous; for Maxime too often demanded payment of men who knew how to reckon those services. At the first refusal, Maxime assumed at once an attitude of hos-

tility, threatening to reveal unpleasant details; for budding dynasties, like infants, have much soiled linen. De Marsay, during his ministry, repaired the mistake of his predecessors, who had ignored the utility of this man. He gave him those secret missions which require a conscience made malleable by the hammer of necessity, an adroitness which recoils before no methods, impudence, and, above all, the self-possession, the coolness, the embracing glance which constitute the hired *bravi* of thought and statesmanship. Such instruments are both rare and necessary.

As a matter of calculation, de Marsay maintained Comte Maxime de Trailles in the highest society; he described him as a man ripened by passions, taught by experience, who knew men and things, to whom travel and a certain faculty for observation had imparted an understanding of European interests, of foreign cabinets, and of all the ramifications of the great continental families. De Marsay convinced Maxime of the necessity of doing himself credit; he taught him discretion, less as a virtue than a speculation; he proved to him that the governing powers would never abandon a solid, safe, elegant, and polished instrument.

"In politics," he said, blaming Maxime for having uttered a threat, "we should never *blackmail* but once."

Maxime was a man who could sound the depths of that saying.

De Marsay dead, Comte Maxime de Trailles had fallen back into his former state of existence. He

went to the baths every year and gambled ; he returned to Paris for the winter ; but, though he received some large sums from the depths of certain niggardly coffers, that sort of half-pay to a daring man kept for use at any moment and possessing many secrets of the art of diplomacy, was insufficient for the dissipations of a life as splendid as that of the king of dandies, the tyrant of several Parisian clubs. Consequently Comte Maxime was often uneasy about matters financial. Possessing no property, he had never been able to consolidate his position by being made a deputy ; also, having no ostensible functions, it was impossible for him to hold a knife at the throat of any minister to compel his nomination as peer of France. At the present moment he saw that Time was getting the better of him ; for his lavish dissipations were beginning to wear upon his person, as they had already worn out his divers fortunes. In spite of his splendid exterior, he knew himself, and could not be deceived about that self. He intended to “make an end” — to marry.

A man of acute mind, he was under no illusion as to the apparent consideration in which he was held ; he well knew it was false. No women were truly on his side, either in the great world of Paris or among the bourgeoisie. Much secret malignity, much apparent good-humor, and many services rendered were necessary to maintain him in his present position ; for every one desired his fall, and a run of ill-luck might at any time ruin him. Once sent to Clichy or forced to leave the country by notes no longer renewable, he would sink into the gulf where so many political car-

casses may be seen, — carcasses of men who find no consolation in one another's company. Even this very evening he was in dread of a collapse of that threatening arch which debt erects over the head of many a Parisian. He had allowed his anxieties to appear upon his face; he had refused to play cards at Madame d'Espard's; he had talked with the women in an absent-minded manner, and finally he had sunk down silent and absorbed in the arm-chair from which he had just risen like Banquo's ghost.

Comte Maxime de Trailles now found himself the object of all glances, direct and indirect, standing as he did before the fireplace and illumined by the cross-lights of two candelabra. The few words said about him compelled him, in a way, to bear himself proudly; and he did so, like a man of sense, without arrogance, and yet with the intention of showing himself to be above suspicion. A painter could scarcely have found a better moment in which to seize the portrait of a man who, in his way, was truly extraordinary. Does it not require rare faculties to play such a part, — to enable one through thirty years to seduce women; to constrain one to employ great gifts in an under-hand sphere only, — inciting a people to rebel, tracking the secrets of astute politicians, and triumphing nowhere but in boudoirs and on the back-stairs of cabinets?

Is there not something, difficult to say what, of greatness in being able to rise to the highest calculations of statesmen and then to fall coldly back into the void of a frivolous life? Where is the man of iron who can withstand the alternating luck of gambling,

the rapid missions of diplomacy, the warfare of fashion and society, the dissipations of gallantry, — the man who makes his memory a library of lies and craft, who envelops such diverse thoughts, such conflicting manœuvres, in one impenetrable cloak of perfect manners? If the wind of favor had blown steadily upon those sails forever set, if the luck of circumstances had attended Maxime, he could have been Mazarin, the Maréchal de Richelieu, Potemkin, or — perhaps more truly — Lauzun, without Pignerol.

The count, though rather tall and constitutionally slender, had of late acquired some protuberance of stomach, but he “restrained it to the majestic,” as Brillat-Savarin once said. His clothes were always so well made, that he kept about his whole person an air of youth, something active and agile, due no doubt to his habits of exercise, — fencing, riding, and hunting. Maxime possessed all the physical graces and elegances of aristocracy, still further increased by his personally superior bearing. His long, Bourbonian face was framed by whiskers and a beard, carefully kept, elegantly cut, and black as jet. This color, the same as that of his abundant hair, he now obtained by an Indian cosmetic, very costly and used in Persia, the secret of which he kept to himself. He deceived the most practised eye as to the white threads which for some time past had invaded his hair. The remarkable property of this dye, used by Persians for their beards only, is that it does not render the features hard; it can be shaded by indigo to harmonize well with the individual character of the skin. It was this operation that Madame Mollot may have seen, — though people in Arcis, by

way of a jest, still ask themselves what it was that Madame Mollot saw.

Maxime had a very handsome forehead, blue eyes, a Greek nose, a pleasant mouth, and a well-cut chin; but the circle of his eyes was now marked with numberless lines, so fine that they might have been traced by a razor and not visible at a little distance. His temples had similar lines. The face was also slightly wrinkled. His eyes, like those of gamblers who have sat up innumerable nights, were covered with a glaze, but the glance, though it was thus weakened, was none the less terrible, — in fact, it terrified; a hidden heat was felt beneath it, a lava of passions not yet extinct. The mouth, once so fresh and rosy, now had colder tints; it was straight no longer, but inclined to the right, — a sinuosity that seemed to indicate falsehood. Vice had twisted the lips, but the teeth were white and handsome.

These blemishes disappeared on a general view of his face and person. His figure was so attractive that no young man could compete with Maxime when on horseback in the Bois, where he seemed younger and more graceful than the youngest and most graceful among them. The privilege of eternal youth has been possessed by several men in our day.

The count was all the more dangerous because he seemed to be easy and indolent, never showing the iron determination which he had about all things. This apparent indifference, which enabled him to abet a popular sedition for the purpose of strengthening the authority of a prince with as much ability as he would have bestowed upon a court intrigue, had a certain

grace. People never distrust calmness and uniformity of manner, especially in France, where we are accustomed to a great deal of movement and stir about the smallest things.

The count, who was dressed in the fashion of 1839, wore a black coat, a cashmere waistcoat of dark blue embroidered with tiny flowers of a lighter blue, black trousers, gray silk stockings, and varnished leather shoes. His watch, placed in one of his waistcoat pockets, was fastened by an elegant chain to a button-hole.

“Rastignac,” he said, accepting the cup of tea which the pretty Madame de Rastignac offered him, “will you come with me to the Austrian ambassador’s?”

“My dear fellow, I am too recently married not to go home with my wife.”

“That means that *later* —” said the young countess, turning round and looking at her husband.

“Later is the end of the world,” replied Maxime. “But I shall certainly win my cause if I take Madame for a judge.”

With a charming gesture, the count invited the pretty countess to come nearer to him. After listening a few moments and looking at her mother, she said to Rastignac: —

“If you want to go to the embassy with Monsieur de Trailles, mamma will take me home.”

A few moments later the Baronne de Nucingen and the Comtesse de Rastignac went away together. Maxime and Rastignac followed a little later, and when they were both seated in the count’s carriage, the latter said: —



“What do you want of me, Maxime? Why do you take me by the throat in this way? What did you say to my wife?”

“I told her I had something to say to you. You are a lucky fellow, you are! You have ended by marrying the only heiress of the Nucingen millions — after twenty years at hard labor.”

“Maxime!”

“But I! here am I, exposed to the doubts of everybody. A miserable coward like du Tillet dares to ask if I have the courage to kill myself! It is high time for me to settle down. Does the ministry want to get rid of me, or does it not? You ought to know. At any rate, you must find out,” continued Maxime, making a gesture with his hand to silence Rastignac. “Here is my plan: listen to it. You ought to serve me, for I have served you, and can serve you again. The life I live now is intolerable; I want an escape from it. Help me to a marriage which shall bring me half a million. Once married, appoint me minister to some wretched little republic in America. I’ll stay there long enough to make my promotion to the same post in Germany legitimate. If I am worth anything, they will soon take me out of it; if I am not worth anything, they can dismiss me. Perhaps I may have a child. If so, I shall be stern with him; his mother will be rich; I’ll make him a minister, perhaps an ambassador.”

“Here is my answer,” said Rastignac. “An incessant battle is going on — greater than common people who are not in it have any idea of — between power in its swaddling-clothes and power in its childhood.

Power in swaddling-clothes is the Chamber of Deputies which, not being restrained by an hereditary chamber — ”

“ Ha! ha! ” said Maxime, “ you are now a peer of France.”

“ I should say the same if I were not,” said the new peer. “ But don’t interrupt me ; you are concerned in all this. The Chamber of Deputies is fated to become the whole government, as de Marsay used to tell us (the only man by whom France could have been saved), for peoples don’t die ; they are slaves or free men, and that’s all. Child-power is the royalty that was crowned in August, 1830. The present ministry is beaten ; it dissolves the Chamber and brings on a general election in order to prevent the coming ministry from calling one ; but it does not expect a victory. If it were victorious in these elections, the dynasty would be in danger ; whereas, if the ministry is beaten, the dynastic party can fight to advantage for a long time. The mistakes of the Chamber will turn to the profit of a will which wants, unfortunately, to be the whole political power. When a ruler is that whole, as Napoleon was, there comes a moment when he must supplement himself ; and having by that time alienated superior men, he, the great single will, can find no assistant. That assistant ought to be what is called a cabinet ; but there is no cabinet in France, there is only a Will with a life lease. In France it is the government that is blamed, the opposition never ; it may lose as many battles as it fights, but, like the allies in 1814, one victory suffices. With “ three glorious days ” it over-turned and destroyed everything. Therefore, if we are

heirs of power, we must cease to govern, and wait. I belong by my personal opinions to the aristocracy, and by my public opinions to the royalty of July. The house of Orléans served me to raise the fortunes of my family, and I shall ever remain attached to it."

"The 'ever' of Monsieur de Talleyrand, be it understood," put in Maxime.

"At this moment I can't do anything for you," continued Rastignac. "We shall not be in power more than six months longer. Yes, those six months will be our last dying agony, I know that; but we know what we were when we formed ourselves, a stop-gap ministry and that was all. But you can distinguish yourself in the electoral battle that is soon to be fought. If you can bring one vote to the Chamber, a deputy faithful to the dynastic cause, you will find your wishes gratified. I will speak of your good services, and I will keep my eye on the reports of our confidential agents; I may find you some difficult task in which you can distinguish yourself. If you succeed, I can insist upon your talents, your devotion, and claim your reward. Your marriage, my dear fellow, can be made only in some ambitious provincial family of tradespeople or manufacturers. In Paris you are too well known. We must therefore look out for a millionaire parvenu, endowed with a daughter, and possessed with a desire to parade himself and his family at the Château des Tuileries."

"Make your father-in-law lend me twenty-five thousand francs to enable me to wait as long as that; he will then have an interest in seeing that I am not paid in holy-water if I succeed; he will further a rich marriage for his own sake."

“You are wily, Maxime, and you distrust me. But I like able men, and I will attend to your affair.”

They reached the Austrian embassy. The Comte de Rastignac saw the minister of the interior in one of the salons and went to talk with him in a corner. Comte Maxime de Trailles, meantime, was apparently engrossed by the old Comtesse de Listomère, but he was, in reality, following the course of the conversation between the two peers of France; he watched their gestures, interpreted their looks, and ended by catching a favorable glance cast upon him by the minister.

Maxime and Rastignac left the embassy together about one in the morning, and before getting into their respective carriages, Rastignac said to Maxime on the steps of the portico: “Come and see me just before the elections. Between now and then I shall know in what locality the chances of the ministry are worst, and what resources two heads like yours and mine can find there.”

“But my twenty-five thousand francs are needed,” replied de Trailles.

“Well, you must hide yourself, that’s all.”

Fifty days later, one morning before dawn, the Comte de Trailles went to the rue de Varennes mysteriously in a hired cab. At the gate of the ministry of Public Works, he sent the cab away, looked about him to see that he was not watched, and then waited in a little salon on the first floor until Rastignac should awake. A few moments later the valet who had taken in his card ushered Maxime into the minister’s bed-chamber, where that statesman was making his morning toilet.

“My dear Maxime,” said the latter, “I can tell you

a secret which will be in the newspapers two days hence, and which, meantime, you can turn to your own profit. That poor Charles Keller, who danced the mazurka so well, has been killed in Africa. His death leaves a vacancy; he was our candidate in the arrondissement of Arcis. Here is a copy of two reports, one from the sub-prefect, the other from the commissary of police, informing the ministry that the election of the poor fellow would meet with opposition. In that of the commissary of police you will find some information about the state of the town which ought to be useful to a man of your shrewdness; it seems that the ambition of the rival candidate comes chiefly from his desire to marry a certain heiress. To one of your calibre that word is enough. The Cinq-Cygnés, the Princesse de Cadignan, and Georges de Maufrigneuse are living at Cinq-Cygne, close to Arcis; you can certainly obtain through them all the Legitimist votes, therefore — ”

“ Don’t waste your breath,” said Maxime. “ Is the commissary still there? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Give me a letter to him.”

“ My dear fellow,” replied Rastignac giving Maxime quite a bundle of papers, “ you will find there two letters written to Gondreville for you. You have been a page and he has been a senator; you can’t fail therefore to understand each other. Madame François Keller is pious; here is a letter introducing you to her from the Maréchale de Carigliano. The maréchale has become dynastic; she recommends you warmly, and may go down herself. I will only add one word:

Distrust the sub-prefect, whom I think capable of working this candidate, this Simon Giguët, into a support for himself with the president of the council. If you want letters, powers, credentials, write to me."

"And those twenty-five thousand francs?" said Maxime.

"Sign this note to the order of du Tillèt, and here 's the money."

"I shall succeed," said the count, "and you may tell the king that the deputy of Arcis shall belong to him body and soul. If I fail, I give you leave to abandon me."

An hour later Maxime de Trailles was in his tilbury on the road to Arcis.

## XIII.

## PREFACE BEFORE LETTERING.

ONCE in possession of the information furnished by the landlady of the Mulet and by the sub-prefect Antonin Goulard, Monsieur de Trailles had soon arranged his plan of electoral operations, and this plan evinces itself so readily that the reader must already have perceived it.

To the candidacy of Simon Giguet, the wily agent of the government policy suddenly and abruptly opposed that of Philéas Beauvisage; and in spite of the nullity and unfitness of that individual this new combination, we must admit, had several incontestable chances of success. In the light of his municipal halo Beauvisage had one enormous advantage with the mass of indifferent voters; as mayor of the town his name was known to them. Logic has much more to do with the conducting of matters and things here below than it seems to have; it is like a woman to whom, after many infidelities, we still return. What common-sense prescribes is that voters called upon to choose their representative in public matters should be thoroughly informed as to his capacity, his honesty, and his general character. Too often, in practice, unfortunate twists are given to this principle; but whenever the electoral sheep, left to their own instincts, can per-

suade themselves that they are voting from their own intelligence and their own lights, we may be certain to see them following that line eagerly and with a sentiment of self-love. Now to know a man's name, electorally speaking, is a good beginning toward a knowledge of the man himself.

Passing from indifferent to interested electors, we may be sure that Philéas was certain of rallying to himself the Gondreville party, now deprived by death of their own candidate. The question for them was to punish the presumption of Simon Giguët, and any candidate would be acceptable to the viceroy of Arcis. The mere nomination of a man against his grandson was a flagrant act of hostility and ingratitude, and a check to the count's provincial importance which must be removed and punished at any cost.

Still, when the first news of his electoral ambition reached his father-in-law, Beauvisage was met by an astonishment little flattering to his feelings and not encouraging. The old notary had gauged his son-in-law once for all, and to his just and upright mind the idea of Philéas as a public man produced in its way the disagreeable effect that discordant instruments produce upon the ear. If it be true that no man is a prophet in his own country, he is often even less so in his own family. Still, the first impression once passed, Grévin would doubtless acclimatize himself to the idea of an expedient which would chime in with the plans he had already made for Séverine's future. Besides, for the safety of Gondreville's interests, so seriously threatened, what sacrifice of his own opinion would the old notary not have made?



With the legitimist and the republican parties who could have no weight in the election, except that of increasing a majority, the candidacy of Beauvisage had a singular recommendation, — namely, his utter incapacity. Conscious of not possessing sufficient strength to elect a deputy of their own, the two extremes of the antidynastic opposition seized, almost with ardor, the opportunity to stick a thorn in the side in what they called “the present order of things,” and it might confidently be expected that in this frame of mind they would joyfully and with all their hearts support a candidate so supremely ridiculous that a large slice of the ridicule must fall upon the government which supported him.

Moreover, in the opinions of the Left-Centre which had provisionally adopted Simon Giguët as its candidate, this move of Beauvisage was likely to produce a serious split; for he too had declared himself a man of the dynastic opposition, and, until further orders, Monsieur de Trailles (though all the while assuring him of the support of the ministry) encouraged his retaining that political tint, which was clearly the most popular in that region. But whatever baggage of political convictions the incorruptible deputy of Arcis might bring with him to Paris, his horoscope was drawn: it was very certain that after his first appearance in the salons of the Tuileries an august seduction would make a henchman of him, if ministerial blandishments had not already produced that result.

The public side of this matter being thus well-planned and provided for, the ministerial agent could turn his attention to the personal aspect of the ques-

tion, namely, that of turning the stuff he was making into a deputy to the still further use of being made into a father-in-law.

First point, the *dot*; second point, the daughter; and both appeared to suit him. The first did not dazzle him; and as to the second, he did not conceal from himself the imperfections of a provincial education which he should have to unmake, but this was no serious objection to his sapient conjugal pedagogy.

Madame Beauvisage, when the matter was laid before her, swept her husband into it at a single bound. Maxime recognized her for an ambitious woman who, in spite of her forty-four years, still had the air of being conscious of a heart. Hence he saw that the game had better begin with a false attack on her to fall back later on the daughter. How far these advanced works should be pushed, circumstances would show. In either case, Maxime was well aware that his title, his reputation as a man of the world, and his masterly power of initiating them into the difficult and elegant mysteries of Parisian society were powerful reasons to bind the two women to him, not to speak of their gratitude for the political success of Monsieur Beauvisage of which he was the author.

But however all this might be, his matrimonial campaign offered one very serious difficulty. The consent of old Grévin would have to be obtained, and he was not a man to allow Cécile to be married without investigating to its depths the whole past of a suitor. This inquiry made, was it not to be feared that the thirty years' stormy biography of a roué would seem to the cautious old man a poor security for the future?

However, the species of governmental mission with which Monsieur de Trailles appeared in Arcis might seem to be an offset and even a condonation that would neutralize the effect of such disclosures. By getting the Comte de Gondreville to confide the news of that mission to old Grévin before it was publicly made known, he had flattered the old man's vanity and obtained a certain foothold in his mind. Moreover, he determined, when the time came, to forestall the old notary's distrust by seeming to distrust himself, and to propose, as a precaution against his old habits of extravagance, to introduce a clause into the marriage-contract providing for the separation of property and settling the wife's fortune upon herself. In this way he gave security against any return to his old habits of prodigality. As for himself, it was his affair to obtain such empire over his wife by the power of sentiment that he could recover practically the marital power of which the contract dispossessed him.

At first nothing occurred to contradict the wisdom and clear-sightedness of all these intentions. The Beauvisage candidacy being made public took fire like a train of gunpowder, and Monsieur de Trailles was able to feel such assurance of the success of his efforts that he wrote to Rastignac informing him of the fortunate and highly successful progress of his mission.

But, all of a sudden, in face of the triumphant Beauvisage arose another candidate; and, be it said in passing for the sake of our history, this rivalry presented itself under such exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that it changed what might have been

a trivial electoral struggle into a drama possessing wider and more varied interests.

The man who now appears in this narrative will play so considerable a part in it that it seems necessary to install him, as it were, by means of retrospective and somewhat lengthy explanations. But to suspend the course of the narrative for this purpose would be to fly in the face of every rule of art and expose the present pious guardian of literary orthodoxy to the wrath of critics. In presence of this difficulty, the author would find himself greatly embarrassed, if his lucky star had not placed in his hands a correspondence in which, with a vim and animation that he himself could never have imparted to them, all the details that are essential to a full explanation will be found related.

These letters must be read with attention. They bring upon the scene many persons already well-known in the *Comedy of Human Life*, and they reveal a vast number of facts necessary to the understanding and development of the present drama. Their statements made, and brought to the point where we now seem to abandon our narrative, the course of that narrative will, without concussion and quite naturally, resume its course; and we like to persuade ourselves that, by thus introducing this series of letters, the unity of our tale, which seemed for a moment in danger, will be maintained.

## PART SECOND.

## LETTERS EXPLANATORY.

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I. THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO MONSIEUR MARIE-GASTON.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR MONSIEUR, — In accordance with your desire I have seen the prefect of police, in order to ascertain if the pious intention of which you wrote me in your letter, dated from Carrara, would meet with opposition from the authorities.

The prefect informed me that the imperial decree of the 23rd Prairial, year XII., by which the whole system of burials is still regulated, establishes, in the most unequivocal manner, the right of all persons to be interred on their own property. You have only to obtain a permit from the prefecture of the Seine-et-Oise, and then, without further formality, you can remove the remains of Madame Marie-Gaston to the mausoleum you propose to erect in your park at Ville-d'Avray.

But I shall venture myself to offer an objection. Are you quite sure that you will not expose yourself to certain difficulties made by the Chaulieus, with whom you are not on the best of terms?

Will they not, to a certain extent, be justified in complaining that the removal from a public cemetery to private grounds of the body of one who is dear to

<sup>1</sup> See "The Memoirs of Two Young Married Women."

them as well as to you, would make their visits to her grave entirely dependent on your good will and pleasure? For of course, and this is evident, you will always have the right to forbid their entrance to your property.

I know that, legally, the body of the wife, living or dead, belongs to the husband, to the exclusion of her relations, even the nearest; but, under the influence of the ill-will of which they have already given you proof, the relations of Madame Marie-Gaston might have the distressing idea of carrying the matter into court, and if so, how painful to you! You would gain the suit, no doubt, for the Duc de Chaulieu's influence is not what it was under the Restoration; but have you reflected on the venom which the speech of a lawyer might shed upon such a question? and remember that he will speak as the echo of honorable affections — those of a father, mother, and two brothers asking not to be deprived of the sad happiness of praying at the grave of their lost one.

If you will let me express my thought, it is not without keen regret that I see you engaged in creating fresh nourishment for your grief, already so long inconsolable. We had hoped that, after passing two years in Italy, you would return to us more resigned, and able to take up an active life which might distract your mind. Evidently, this species of temple which you propose, in the fervor of your recollections, to erect in a spot where they are, alas! already too numerous, can only serve to perpetuate their bitterness; and I cannot approve the revival you are proposing to make of them.

Nevertheless, as we should always serve a friend according to his wishes, not our own, I have done your commission relating to Monsieur Dorlange, the sculptor, but I must tell you frankly that he showed no eagerness to enter into your wishes. His first remark, when I announced myself as coming from you, was that he did not know you; and this reply, singular as it may seem to you, was made so naturally that at first I thought there must be some mistake, the result, possibly, of confusion of name. However, before long your oblivious friend was willing to agree that he studied with you at the college of Tours and also that he was the same Monsieur Dorlange who, in 1831 and under quite exceptional circumstances, carried off the grand prize for sculpture. No doubt remained in my mind as to his identity. I attributed his want of memory to the long interruption (of which you yourself told me) in your intercourse. I think that that interruption wounded him more than you are aware, and when he seemed to have forgotten your very name, it was simply a revenge he could not help taking when the occasion offered.

But that was not the real obstacle. Remembering the fraternal intimacy that once existed between Monsieur Dorlange and yourself, I could not suppose his wounded feelings inexorable. So, after explaining to him the nature of the work you wanted him to do, I was about to say a few words as to the grievance he might have against you, when I suddenly found myself face to face with an obstacle of a most unexpected nature.

“Monsieur,” he said to me, “the importance of the

order you wish to give me, the assurance that no expense should be spared for the grandeur and perfection of the work, the invitation you convey to me to go to Carrara and choose the marble and see it excavated, all that is truly a great piece of good fortune for an artist, and at any other time I should gladly have accepted it. But at the present moment, without having actually decided to abandon the career of Art, I am on the point of entering that of politics. My friends urge me to present myself at the coming elections, and you will easily see that, if elected, my parliamentary duties and my initiation into an absolutely new life would, for a long time at least, preclude my entering with sufficient absorption of mind into the work you propose to me." And then, after a pause, he added: "I should have to satisfy a great grief which seeks consolation from this projected mausoleum. Such grief would, naturally, be impatient; whereas I should be slow, preoccupied in mind, and probably hindered. It is therefore better that the proposal should be made elsewhere; but this will not prevent me from feeling, as I ought, both gratified and honored by the confidence shown in me."

I thought for a moment of asking him whether, in case his election failed, I could then renew the proposal, but on the whole I contented myself with expressing regret and saying that I would inform you of the result of my mission. It is useless to add that I shall know in a few days the upshot of this sudden parliamentary ambition which has, so inopportunately, started up in your way.

I think myself that this candidacy may be only a



blind. Had you not better write yourself to Monsieur Dorlange? for his whole manner, though perfectly polite and proper, seemed to show a keen remembrance of the wrong you did him in renouncing his friendship, with that of your other friends, at the time of your marriage. I know it may cost you some pain to explain the really exceptional circumstances of your marriage; but after what I have seen in the mind of your old friend, I think, if you really wish for the assistance of his great talent, you should personally take some steps to obtain it.

But if you feel that any such action is more than you have strength for, I suggest another means. In all matters in which my wife has taken part I have found her a most able negotiator; and in this particular case I should feel the utmost confidence in her intervention. She herself suffered from the exclusiveness of Madame Marie-Gaston's love for you. No one can explain to him better than she the absorbing conjugal life which drew its folds so closely around you. And it seems to me that the magnanimity and comprehension which she always showed to her "dear lost treasure," as she calls her, might be conveyed by her to your friend.

You have plenty of time to think over this suggestion, for Madame de l'Estorade is, just now, still suffering from a serious illness, brought on by maternal terror. A week ago our little Naïs came near being crushed to death before her eyes; and without the courageous assistance of a stranger who sprang to the horses' heads and stopped them short, God knows what dreadful misfortune would have overtaken us. This cruel emotion produced in Madame de l'Estorade a nervous

condition which seriously alarmed us for a time. Though she is now much better, it will be several days before she could see Monsieur Dorlange in case her feminine mediation may seem to you desirable.

But once more, in closing, my dear Monsieur Gaston, would it not be better to abandon your idea? A vast expense, a painful quarrel with the Chaulieus, and, for you, a renewal of your bitter sorrow — this is what I fear. Nevertheless, I am, at all times and for all things, entirely at your orders, as indeed my sentiments of esteem and gratitude command.

II. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE  
DE CAMPS.

PARIS, February, 1839.

DEAR MADAME DE CAMPS, — Of all the proofs of sympathy which the accident to my dear child has brought me, not one has touched me so much as your excellent letter.

In reply to your affectionate solicitude I must tell you that in that terrible moment Naïs was marvellously calm and self-possessed. It could not, I think, be possible to see death nearer; yet neither before nor after the accident did my valiant little daughter even blench; her whole behavior showed the utmost resolution, and, thank God! her health has not suffered for a moment.

As for me, in consequence of such terror, I was seized with convulsive spasms, and for several days, as I now hear, the doctors were very uneasy, and even feared for my reason. But thanks to the strength of my constitution, I am now almost myself again, and

nothing would remain of this cruel agitation if, by a singular fatality, it were not connected with another unpleasant circumstance which has lately seen fit to fasten upon my life.

Before receiving from your letter these fresh assurances of your regard, I had thought of invoking the help of your friendship and advice; and to-day, when you tell me that it would make you happy and proud to take the place of my poor Louise de Chaulieu, the precious friend of whom death has deprived me, can I hesitate for a moment?

I take you at your word, and that delightful cleverness with which you foiled the fools who commented on your marriage to Monsieur de Camps [see "*Madame Firmiani*"], that singular tact with which we saw you steer your way through circumstances that were full of embarrassment and danger, in short the wonderful art which enabled you to keep both your secret and your dignity, I now ask you to put to the service of assisting me in the dilemma I mentioned just now.

Unfortunately in consulting a physician we naturally want to see him and tell our symptoms *viva voce*, and it is here that Monsieur de Camps with his industrial genius seems to me most aggravating. Thanks to those villanous iron-works which he has taken it into his head to purchase, you are almost lost to Paris and to society! Formerly when we had you here, at hand, in ten minutes talk, without embarrassment, without preparation, I could have told you everything; but now I am obliged to think over what I have to say, to gather myself together, and pass into the solemnity of a written statement.

But after all, perhaps it is better to plunge boldly in, and since, in spite of circumlocutions and preambles, I shall have sooner or later to come to the point, why not say at once that my trouble concerns the stranger who saved my daughter's life.

Stranger! yes, a stranger to Monsieur de l'Estorade and to all who have told you about the accident, but not a stranger to me, whom, for the last three months, this man has condescended to honor with the most obstinate attention. That the mother of three children, one of them a big boy of fifteen, should at thirty-three years of age become the object of an ardent passion will seem to you, as it does to me, an impossible fact; and that is the ridiculous misfortune about which I want to consult you.

When I say that this stranger is known to me, I must correct myself; for I know neither his name, nor his abode, nor anything about him. I have never met him in society, and I may add that, although he wears the ribbon of the Legion of honor, there is nothing in his air and manner — which are totally devoid of elegance — to make me suppose I ever shall meet him in our world.

It was at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, where, as you know, I go to hear mass, that this annoying obsession began. I used almost daily to take my children to walk in the Tuileries, as the house we have hired here has no garden. This habit being noticed by my persecutor, I found him repeatedly there and wherever else I might be met outside of my own home. Perfectly discreet, although so audacious, this singular follower never accompanied me to my own door; he kept at a

sufficient distance to give me the comfort of feeling that his foolish assiduity would not be observed by others.

Heaven only knows the sacrifices and annoyances I have borne to be rid of him. I never go to church now except on Sundays; I often keep my dear children at home to the injury of their health; or else I make excuses not to accompany them, and against all my principles of education and prudence, I leave them to the care of the servants. Visits, shopping I do only in a carriage, which did not prevent my *shadow* from being at hand when the accident happened to Naïs, and saving her life, an act that was brave and providential.

But it is precisely this great obligation I am now under which makes — does it not, I appeal to you? — a most deplorable complication.

In the first place, about thanking him. If I do that, I encourage him, and he would certainly take advantage of it to change the character of our present intercourse. But if I pass him without notice — think of it! a mother — a mother who owes him the life of her daughter, to pretend not to see him! to pass him without a single word of gratitude!

That, however, is the intolerable alternative in which I find myself placed, and you can now see how much I need the counsels of your experience. What can I do to break the unpleasant habit this man has taken of being my *shadow*? How shall I thank him without encouraging him? or not thank him without incurring self-reproach?

Those are the problems submitted to your wisdom. If you will do me the kindness to solve them — and I

know no one so capable — I shall add gratitude to all the other affectionate sentiments which, as you know, I have so long felt for you.

III. THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE TO MONSIEUR  
MARIE-GASTON.

PARIS, February, 1839.

Perhaps, my dear Monsieur Gaston, the public journals will have told you before this letter can arrive of the duel fought yesterday between your friend Monsieur Dorlange and the Duc de Rhétoré. But the papers, while announcing the fact as a piece of news, are debarred by custom and propriety from inferring the motives of a quarrel, and therefore they will only excite your curiosity without satisfying it.

I have, fortunately, heard from a very good source, all the details of the affair, and I hasten to transmit them to you; they are, I think, of a nature to interest you to the highest degree.

Three days ago, that is to say on the very evening of the day when I paid my visit to Monsieur Dorlange, the Duc de Rhétoré occupied a stall at the Opera-house. Next to him sat Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who has recently returned from a diplomatic mission which kept him out of France for several years. During the entr'acte these gentlemen did not leave their seats to walk about the foyer; but, as is often done, they stood up, with their backs to the stage, facing the audience and consequently Monsieur Dorlange, who was seated directly behind them, seeming to be absorbed in an evening newspaper. There had been that day a very

scandalous, or what is called a very interesting, session of the Chamber of deputies.

The conversation between the duke and the marquis having naturally turned on the events of Parisian society which had taken place during Monsieur de Ronquerolles' absence, the latter made the following remark which was of a nature to rouse the attention of Monsieur Dorlange.

"Your poor sister Madame de Macumer! what a sad end, after her singular marriage!"

"Ah! you know," replied Monsieur de Rhétoré, in that high-pitched voice of his, "my sister had too much imagination not to be romantic and visionary. She loved her first husband, Monsieur de Macumer, passionately, but after a time one gets tired of everything, even widowhood. This Marie-Gaston crossed her path. He is agreeable in person; my sister was rich; he was deeply in debt and behaved with corresponding eagerness and devotion. The result was that the scoundrel not only succeeded Monsieur de Macumer and killed his wife with jealousy, but he got out of her every penny the law allowed the poor foolish woman to dispose of. My sister's property amounted to at least twelve hundred thousand francs, not counting a delightful villa splendidly furnished which she built at Ville d'Avray. Half of this that man obtained, the other half went to the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulieu, my father and mother, who were entitled to it by law as heirs ascendant. As for my brother Lenoncourt and myself, we were simply disinherited."

As soon as your name, my dear Monsieur Gaston,

was uttered, Monsieur Dorlange laid aside his newspaper, and then, as Monsieur de Rhétoré ended his remarks, he rose and said:—

“Pardon me, Monsieur le duc, if I venture to correct your statement; but, as a matter of conscience, I ought to inform you that you are totally misinformed.”

“What is that you say?” returned the duke, blinking his eyes and speaking in that contemptuous tone we can all imagine.

“I say, Monsieur le duc, that Marie-Gaston is my friend from childhood; he has never been thought a *scoundrel*; on the contrary, the world knows him as a man of honor and talent. So far from killing his wife with jealousy, he made her perfectly happy during the three years their marriage lasted. As for the property — ”

“Have you considered, monsieur,” said the Duc de Rhétoré, interrupting him, “the result of such language?”

“Thoroughly, monsieur; and I repeat that the property left to Marie-Gaston by the will of his wife is so little desired by him that, to my knowledge, he is about to spend a sum of two or three hundred thousand francs in building a mausoleum for a wife whom he has never ceased to mourn.”

“After all, monsieur, who are you?” said the Duc de Rhétoré, again interrupting him with ill-restrained impatience.

“Presently,” replied Monsieur Dorlange, “I shall have the honor to tell you; you must now permit me to add that the property of which you say you have



been disinherited Madame Marie-Gaston had the right to dispose of without any remorse of conscience. It came from her first husband, the Baron de Macumer; and she had, previously to that marriage, given up her own property in order to constitute a fortune for your brother, the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, who, as younger son, had not, like you, Monsieur le Duc, the advantages of an entail."

So saying, Monsieur Dorlange felt in his pocket for his card-case.

"I have no cards with me," he said at last, "but my name is Dorlange, a theatrical name, easy to remember, and I live at No. 42 rue de l'Ouest."

"Not a very central quarter," remarked Monsieur de Rhétoré, ironically. Then turning to Monsieur de Ronquerolles, whom he thus constituted one of his seconds, "I beg your pardon, my dear fellow," he said, "for the voyage of discovery you will have to undertake for me to-morrow morning." And then almost immediately he added: "Come to the foyer; we can talk there with greater *safety*."

By his manner of accenting the last word it was impossible to mistake the insulting meaning he intended to attach to it.

The two gentlemen having left their seats, without this scene attracting any notice, in consequence of the stalls being empty for the most part during the entr'acte, Monsieur Dorlange saw at some distance the celebrated sculptor Stidmann, and went up to him.

"Have you a note-book of any kind in your pocket?" he said.

"Yes, I always carry one."

“Will you lend it to me and let me tear out a page? I have an idea in my mind which I don’t want to lose. If I do not see you again after the play to make restitution, I will send it to you to-morrow morning without fail.”

Returning to his place, Monsieur Dorlange sketched something rapidly, and when the curtain rose and the two gentlemen returned to their seats, he touched the Duc de Rhétoré lightly on the shoulder and said, giving him the drawing:—

“My card, which I have the honor to present to you.”

This “card” was a charming sketch of an architectural design placed in a landscape. Beneath it was written “Plan for a mausoleum to be erected to the memory of Madame Marie-Gaston, *née* Chaulieu, by her husband; from the designs of Charles Dorlange, sculptor, 42 rue de l’Ouest.”

It was impossible to let Monsieur de Rhétoré know more delicately that he had to do with a suitable adversary; and you will remark, my dear Monsieur Gaston, that Monsieur Dorlange made this drawing the means of enforcing his denial and giving proof of your disinterestedness and the sincerity of your grief.”

After the play was over, Monsieur de Rhétoré parted from Monsieur de Ronquerolles, and the latter went up to Monsieur Dorlange and endeavored, very courteously, to bring about a reconciliation, remarking to him that, while he was right in the subject-matter, his method of proceeding was unusual and offensive; Monsieur de Rhétoré, on the other hand, had shown

great moderation, and would now be satisfied with a mere expression of regret; in short, Monsieur de Ronquerolles said all that can be said on such an occasion.

Monsieur Dorlange would not listen to anything which seemed a submission on his part, and the next day he received a visit from Monsieur de Ronquerolles and General Montriveau on behalf of the Duc de Rhétoré. Again an effort was made to induce Monsieur Dorlange to give another turn to his words. But your friend would not depart from this ultimatum:—

“Will Monsieur de Rhétoré withdraw the words I felt bound to notice; if so, I will withdraw mine.”

“But that is impossible,” they said to him. “Monsieur de Rhétoré has been personally insulted; you, on the contrary, have not been. Right or wrong, he has the conviction that Monsieur Marie-Gaston has done him an injury. We must always make certain allowances for wounded self-interests; you can never get absolute justice from them.”

“It comes to this, then,” replied Monsieur Dorlange, “that Monsieur de Rhétoré may continue to calumniate my friend at his ease; in the first place, because he is in Italy; and secondly, because Marie-Gaston would always feel extreme repugnance to come to certain extremities with the brother of his wife. It is precisely that powerlessness, relatively speaking, to defend himself, which constitutes my right—I will say more—my duty to interfere. It was not without a special permission of Providence that I was enabled to catch a few of the malicious words that were said of him, and, as Monsieur de Rhétoré declines to modify

any of them, we must, if it please you, continue this matter to the end."

The duel then became inevitable; the terms were arranged in the course of the day, and the meeting, with pistols, was appointed for the day after. On the ground Monsieur Dorlange was perfectly cool. When the first fire was exchanged without result, the seconds proposed to put an end to the affair.

"No, one more shot!" he said gayly, as if he were shooting in a pistol-gallery.

This time he was shot in the fleshy part of the thigh, not a dangerous wound, but one which caused him to lose a great deal of blood. As they carried him to the carriage which brought him, Monsieur de Rhétoré, who hastened to assist them, being close beside him, he said, aloud:—

"This does not prevent Marie-Gaston from being a man of honor and a heart of gold."

Then he fainted.

This duel, as you can well believe, has made a great commotion; Monsieur Dorlange has been the hero of the hour for the last two days; it is impossible to enter a single salon without finding him the one topic of conversation. I heard more, perhaps, in the salon of Madame de Montcornet than elsewhere. She receives, as you know, many artists and men of letters, and to give you an idea of the manner in which your friend is considered, I need only stenograph a conversation at which I was present in the countess's salon last evening.

The chief talkers were Émile Blondet of the "Débats," and Monsieur Bixiou, the caricaturist, one

of the best-informed *ferrets* of Paris. They are both, I think, acquaintances of yours, but, at any rate, I am certain of your intimacy with Joseph Bridau, our great painter, who shared in the talk, for I well remember that he and Daniel d'Arthèz were the witnesses of your marriage.

"The first appearance of Dorlange in art," Joseph Bridau was saying, when I joined them, "was fine; the makings of a master were already so apparent in the work he did for his examinations that the Academy, under pressure of opinion, decided to crown him — though he laughed a good deal at its programme."

"True," said Bixiou, "and that 'Pandora' he exhibited in 1837, after his return from Rome, is also a very remarkable figure. But as she won him, at once, the cross and any number of commissions from the government and the municipality, together with scores of flourishing articles in the newspapers, I don't see how he can rise any higher after all that success."

"That," said Blondet, "is a regular Bixiou opinion."

"No doubt; and well-founded it is. Do you know the man?"

"No; he is never seen anywhere."

"Exactly; he is a bear, but a premeditated bear; a reflecting and determined bear."

"I don't see," said Joseph Bridau, "why this savage inclination for solitude should be so bad for an artist. What does a sculptor gain by frequenting salons where gentlemen and ladies have taken to a habit of wearing clothes?"

"Well, in the first place, a sculptor can amuse himself in a salon; and that will keep him from taking

up a mania, or becoming a visionary; besides, he sees the world as it is, and learns that 1839 is not the fifteenth nor the sixteenth century."

"Has Dorlange any such delusions?" asked Émile Blondet.

"He? he will talk to you by the hour of returning to the life of the great artists of the middle ages with the universality of their studies and their knowledge, and that frightfully laborious life of theirs; which may help us to understand the habits and ways of a semi-barbarous society, but can never exist in ours. He does not see, the innocent dreamer, that civilization, by strangely complicating all social conditions, absorbs for business, for interests, for pleasures, thrice as much time as a less advanced society required for the same purposes. Look at the savage in his hut; he has n't anything to do. Whereas we, with the Bourse, the opera, the newspapers, parliamentary discussions, salons, elections, railways, the Café de Paris and the National Guard — what time have we, if you please, to go to work?"

"Beautiful theory of a do-nothing!" cried Émile Blondet, laughing.

"No, my dear fellow, I am talking truth. The curfew no longer rings at nine o'clock. Only last night my concierge Ravenouillet gave a party; and I think I made a great mistake in not accepting the indirect invitation he gave me to be present."

"Nevertheless," said Joseph Bridau, "it is certain that if a man does n't mingle in the business, the interests, and the pleasures of our epoch, he can make out of the time he thus saves a pretty capital. Indepen-

dently of his orders, Dorlange has, I think, a little competence; so that nothing hinders him from arranging his life to suit himself."

"But you see he goes to the opera; for it was there he found his duel. Besides, you are all wrong in representing him as isolated from this contemporaneous life, for I happen to know that he is just about to harness himself to it by the most rattling and compelling chains of the social system — I mean political interests."

"Does he want to be a statesman?" asked Émile Blondet, sarcastically.

"Yes, no doubt that's in his famous programme of universality; and you ought to see the consistency and perseverance he puts into that idea! Only last year two hundred and fifty thousand francs dropped into his mouth as if from the skies, and he instantly bought a hovel in the rue Saint-Martin to make himself eligible for the Chamber. Then — another pretty speculation — with the rest of the money he bought stock in the 'National,' where I meet him every time I want to have a laugh over the republican Utopia. He has his flatterers on the staff of that estimable newspaper; they have persuaded him that he's a born orator and can cut the finest figure in the Chamber. They even talk of getting up a candidacy for him; and on some of their enthusiastic days they go so far as to assert that he bears a distant likeness to Danton."

"But this is getting burlesque," said Émile Blondet.

I don't know if you have ever remarked, my dear Monsieur Gaston, that in men of real talent there is

always great leniency of judgment. In this, Joseph Bridau is pre-eminent.

"I think with you," he said, "that if Dorlange takes this step, and enters politics, he will be lost to art. But, after all, why should he not succeed in the Chamber? He expresses himself with great facility, and seems to me to have ideas at his command. Look at Canalis when he was made deputy! 'What! a poet!' everybody cried out, — which did n't prevent him from making himself a fine reputation as orator, and becoming a minister."

"But the first question is how to get into the Chamber," said Émile Blondet. "Where does Dorlange propose to stand?"

"Why, naturally, for one of the rotten boroughs of the 'National.' I don't know if it has yet been chosen."

"General rule," said the writer for the "Débats." "To obtain your election, even though you may have the support of an active and ardent party, you must also have a somewhat extended political notoriety, or, at any rate, some provincial backing of family or fortune. Has Dorlange any of those elements of success?"

"As for the backing of a family, that element is particularly lacking," replied Bixiou; "in fact, in his case, it is conspicuously absent."

"Really?" said Émile Blondet. "Is he a natural child?"

"Nothing could be more natural, — rather and mother unknown. But I believe, myself, that he can be elected. It is the ins and outs of his political ideas that will be the wonder."



“He is a republican, I suppose, if he is a friend of those ‘National’ gentlemen, and resembles Danton?”

“Yes, of course; but he despises his co-religionists, declaring they are only good for carrying a point, and for violence and bullying. Provisionally, he is satisfied with a monarchy hedged in by republican institutions; but he insists that our civic royalty will infallibly be lost through the abuse of influence, which he roughly calls corruption. This will lead him towards the little Church of the Left-centre; but there again — for there’s always a but — he finds only a collection of ambitious minds and eunuchs unconsciously smoothing the way to a revolution, which he, for his part, sees looming on the horizon with great regret, because, he says, the masses are too little prepared, and too little intelligent, not to let it slip through their fingers. Legitimacy he simply laughs at; he does n’t admit it to be a principle in any way. To him it is simply the most fixed and consistent form of monarchical heredity; he sees no other superiority in it than that of old wine over new. But while he is neither legitimist, nor conservative, nor Left-centre, and is republican without wanting a republic, he proclaims himself a catholic, and sits astride the hobby of that party, namely, — liberty of education. But this man, who wants free education for every one, is afraid of the Jesuits; and he is still, as in 1829, uneasy about the encroachments of the clergy and the Congregation. Can any of you guess the great party which he proposes to create in the Chamber, and of which he intends to be the leader? That of the righteous man, the impartial man, the honest man! as if any such thing could live and

breathe in the parliamentary cook-shops; and as if, moreover, all opinions, to hide their ugly nothingness, had not, from time immemorial, wrapped themselves in that banner."

"Does he mean to renounce sculpture absolutely?" asked Joseph Bridau.

"Not yet; he is just finishing the statue of some saint, I don't know which; but he lets no one see it, and says he does not intend to send it to the Exhibition this year — he has ideas about it."

"What ideas?" asked Émile Blondet.

"Oh! that religious works ought not to be delivered over to the judgment of critics, or to the gaze of a public rotten with scepticism; they ought, he thinks, to go, without passing through the uproar of the world, piously and modestly to the niches for which they are intended.

"*Ah ça!*" exclaimed Émile Blondet, "and it is this fervent catholic who fights a duel!"

"Better or worse than that. This catholic lives with a woman whom he brought back from Italy, — a species of Goddess of Liberty, who serves him as model and housekeeper."

"What a tongue that Bixiou has; he keeps a regular intelligence office," said some of the little group as it broke up at the offer of tea from Madame de Montcornet.

You see from this, my dear Monsieur Gaston, that the political aspirations of Monsieur Dorlange are not regarded seriously by his friends. I do not doubt that you will write to him soon to thank him for the warmth with which he defended you from calumny. That

Courageous devotion has given me a true sympathy for him, and I shall hope that you will use the influence of early friendship to turn his mind from the deplorable path he seems about to enter. I make no judgment on the other peculiarities attributed to him by Monsieur Bixiou, who has a cutting and a flippant tongue; I am more inclined to think, with Joseph Bridau, that such mistakes are venial. But a fault to be forever regretted, according to my ideas, will be that of abandoning his present career to fling himself into the maelström of politics. You are yourself interested in turning him from this idea, if you strongly desire to entrust that work to his hands. Preach to him as strongly as you can the wisdom of abiding by his art.

On the subject of the explanation I advised you to have with him, I must tell you that your task is greatly simplified. You need not enter into any of the details which would be to you so painful. Madame de l'Estorade, to whom I spoke of the rôle of mediator which I wanted her to play, accepted the part very willingly. She feels confident of being able, after half an hour's conversation, to remove the painful feeling from your friend's mind, and drive away the clouds between you.

While writing this long letter, I have sent for news of his condition. He is going on favorably, and the physicians say that, barring all unforeseen accidents, his friends need have no anxiety as to his state. It seems he is an object of general interest, for, to use the expression of my valet, people are "making cue" to leave their names at his door. It must be added that the Duke de Rhétoré is not liked, which may partly account for this sympathy. The duke is stiff

and haughty, but there is little in him. What a contrast the brother is to her who lives in our tenderest memory. She was simple and kind, yet she never derogated from her dignity; nothing equalled the lovable qualities of her heart but the charms of her mind.

IV. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE  
DE CAMPS.

PARIS, February, 1839.

Nothing could be more judicious than what you have written me, my dear friend. It was certainly to have been expected that my "bore" would have approached me on the occasion of our next meeting. His heroism gave him the right to do so, and politeness made it a duty. Under pain of being thought unmannerly he was bound to make inquiries as to the results of the accident on my health and that of Naïs. But if, contrary to all these expectations, he did not descend from his cloud, my resolution, under your judicious advice, was taken. If the mountain did not come to me, I should go to the mountain; like Hippolyte in the tale of Thérémène, I would rush upon the monster and discharge my gratitude upon him at short range. I have come to think with you that the really dangerous side of this foolish obsession on his part is its duration and the inevitable gossip in which, sooner or later, it would involve me.

Therefore, I not only accepted the necessity of speaking to my shadow first, but under pretence that my husband wished to call upon him and thank him in person, I determined to ask him his name and address,

and if I found him a suitable person I intended to ask him to dinner on the following day; believing that if he had but a shadow of common-sense, he would, when he saw the manner in which I live with my husband, my frantic passion, as you call it, for my children, in short, the whole atmosphere of my well-ordered home, he would, as I say, certainly see the folly of persisting in his present course. At any rate half the danger of his pursuit was over if it were carried on openly. If I was still to be persecuted, it would be in my own home, where we are all, more or less, exposed to such annoyances, which an honest woman possessing some resources of mind can always escape with honor.

Well, all these fine schemes and all your excellent advice have come to nothing. Since the accident, or rather since the day when my physician first allowed me to go out, nothing, absolutely nothing have I seen of my unknown lover. But, strange to say, although his presence was intolerably annoying, I am conscious that he still exercises a sort of magnetism over me. Without seeing him, I feel him near me; his eyes weigh upon me, though I do not meet them. He is ugly, but his ugliness has something energetic and powerfully marked, which makes one remember him as a man of strong and energetic faculties. In fact, it is impossible not to think about him; and now that he appears to have relieved me of his presence, I am conscious of a void — that sort of void the ear feels when a sharp and piercing noise which has long annoyed it ceases. What I am going to add may seem to you great foolishness; but are we always mistress of such mirages of the imagination?

I have often told you of my arguments with Louise de Chaulieu in relation to the manner in which women ought to look at life. I used to tell her that the passion with which she never ceased to pursue the ideal was ill-regulated and fatal to happiness. To this she answered: "You have never loved, my dearest; love has this rare phenomenon about it: we may live all our lives without ever meeting the being to whom nature has assigned the power of making us happy. But if the day of splendor comes when that being unexpectedly awakes your heart from sleep, what will you do then?" [See "*Memoirs of Two Young Married Women.*"]

The words of those about to die are often prophetic. What if this man were to be the tardy serpent with whom Louise threatened me? That he could ever be really dangerous to me; that he could make me fail in my duty, that is certainly not what I fear; I am strong against all such extremes. But I did not, like you, my dear Madame de Camps, marry a man whom my heart had chosen. It was only by dint of patience, determination, and reason that I was able to build up the solid and serious attachment which binds me to Monsieur de l'Estorade. Ought I not, therefore, to be doubly cautious lest anything distract me from that sentiment, be it only the diversion of my thoughts in this annoying manner, to another man?

I shall say to you, as, MONSIEUR, Louis XIV.'s brother, said to his wife, to whom he was in the habit of showing what he had written and asking her to decipher it: See into my heart and mind, dear friend, disperse the mists, quiet the worries, and the flux and reflux of will which this affair stirs up in me. My poor Louise was

mistaken, was she not? I am not a woman, am I, on whom the passion of love could gain a foothold? The man who, on some glorious day, will render me happy is my Armand, my René, my Naïs, three angels for whom I have hitherto lived — there can never be for me, I feel it deeply, another passion!

V. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE  
DE CAMPS.

PARIS, March, 1839.

About the year 1820 in the course of the same week two *news* (to use the schoolboy phrase of my son Armand) entered the college of Tours. One had a charming face, the other would have been thought ugly if health, frankness, and intelligence beaming on his features had not compensated for their irregularity and inelegance.

Here you will stop me, and ask whether I have come to the end of my own adventure, that I should now be writing this feuilleton-story. No, this tale is really a continuation of that adventure, though it seems little like it; so, give it your best attention and do not interrupt me again.

One of these lads, the handsome one, was dreamy, contemplative, and a trifle *elegiac*; the other, ardent, impetuous, and always in action. They were two natures which completed each other; a priceless blessing to every friendship that is destined to last. Both had the same bar-sinister on them at their birth. The dreamer was the natural son of the unfortunate Lady Brandon. His name was Marie-Gaston; which, indeed,

seems hardly an actual name. The other, born of wholly unknown parents, was named Dorlange, which is certainly no name at all. Dorlange, Valmon, Volmar, Melcourt, are heard upon the stage and nowhere else; already they belong to a past style, and will soon rejoin Alceste, Arnolphe, Clitandre, Damis, Éraste, Philinte, and Arsinoë.

Another reason why the poor ill-born lads should cling together was the cruel abandonment to which they were consigned. For the seven years their studies lasted there was not a day, even during the holidays, when the door of their prison opened. Now and then Marie-Gaston received a visit from an old woman who had served his mother; through her the quarterly payment for his schooling was regularly made. That of Dorlange was also made with great punctuality through a banker in Tours. A point to be remarked is that the price paid for the schooling of the latter was the highest which the rules of the establishment allowed; hence the conclusion that his unknown parents were persons in easy circumstances. Among his comrades, Dorlange attained to a certain respect which, had it been withheld, he would very well have known how to enforce with his fists. But under their breaths, his comrades remarked that he was never sent for to see friends in the parlor, and that outside the college walls no one appeared to take an interest in him.

The two lads, who were both destined to become distinguished men, were poor scholars; though each had his own way of studying. By the time he was fifteen Marie-Gaston had written a volume of verses,



satires, elegies, meditations, not to speak of two tragedies. The favorite studies of Dorlange led him to steal logs of wood, out of which, with his knife, he carved madonnas, grotesque figures, fencing-masters, saints, grenadiers of the Old Guard, and, but this was secretly, Napoleons.

In 1827, their school-days ended, the two friends left college together and were sent to Paris. A place had been chosen for Dorlange in the atelier of the sculptor Bosio, and from that moment a rather fantastic course was pursued by an unseen protection that hovered over him. When he reached the house in Paris to which the head-master of the school had sent him, he found a dainty little apartment prepared for his reception. Under the glass shade of the clock was a large envelope addressed to him, so placed as to strike his eye the moment that he entered the room. In that envelope was a note, written in pencil, containing these words:—

“The day after your arrival in Paris go at eight in the morning punctually to the garden of the Luxembourg, Allée de l’Observatoire, fourth bench to right, starting from the gate. This order is strict. Do not fail to obey it.”

Punctual to the minute, Dorlange was not long at the place of rendezvous before he was met by a very small man, whose enormous head, bearing an immense shock of hair, together with a pointed nose, chin, and crooked legs made him seem like a being escaped from one of Hoffmann’s tales. Without saying a word, for to his other physical advantages this weird messenger added that of being deaf and dumb, he placed in the

young man's hand a letter and a purse. The letter said that the family of Dorlange were glad to see that he wished to devote himself to art. They urged him to work bravely and to profit by the instructions of the great master under whose direction he was placed. They hoped he would live virtuously; and, in any case, an eye would be kept upon his conduct. There was no desire, the letter went on to say, that he should be deprived of the respectable amusements of his age. For his needs and for his pleasures, he might count upon the sum of six hundred and fifty francs every three months, which would be given to him in the same place by the same man; but he was expressly forbidden to follow the messenger after he had fulfilled his commission; if this injunction were directly or indirectly disobeyed, the punishment would be severe; it would be nothing less than the withdrawal of the stipend and, possibly, total abandonment.

Do you remember, my dear Madame de Camps, that in 1831 you and I went together to the Beaux-Arts to see the exhibition of works which were competing for the Grand Prix in sculpture? The subject given out for competition was Niobe weeping for her children. Do you also remember my indignation at one of the competing works around which the crowd was so compact that we could scarcely approach it? The insolent youth had dared to turn that sacred subject into jest! His Niobe was infinitely touching in her beauty and grief, but to represent her children, as he did, by monkeys squirming on the ground in the most varied and grotesque attitudes, what a deplorable abuse of talent!—

You tried in vain to make me see that the monkeys were enchantingly graceful and clever, and that a mother's blind idolatry could not be more ingeniously ridiculed; I held to my opinion that the conception was monstrous, and the indignation of the old academicians who demanded the expulsion of this intolerable work, seemed to me most justifiable. But the Academy, instigated by the public and by the newspapers, which talked of opening a subscription to send the young sculptor to Rome, were not of my opinion and that of their older members. The extreme beauty of the Niobe atoned for all the rest and the defamer of mothers saw his work crowned, in spite of an admonition given to him by the venerable secretary on the day of the distribution of the prizes. But, poor fellow! I excuse him, for I now learn that he never knew his mother. It was Dorlange, the poor abandoned child at Tours, the friend of Marie-Gaston.

From 1827 to 1831 the two friends were inseparable. Dorlange, regularly supplied with means, was a sort of Marquis d'Aligre; Gaston, on the contrary, was reduced to his own resources for a living, and would have lived a life of extreme poverty had it not been for his friend. But where friends love each other—and the situation is more rare than people imagine—all on one side and nothing on the other is a determining cause for association. So, without any reckoning between them, our two pigeons held in common their purse, their earnings, their pains, pleasures, hopes, in fact, they held all things in common, and lived but one life between the two. This state of things lasted till Dorlange had won the Grand Prix,

and started for Rome. Henceforth community of interests was no longer possible. But Dorlange, still receiving an ample income through his mysterious dwarf, bethought him of making over to Gaston the fifteen hundred francs paid to him by the government for the "prix de Rome." But a good heart in receiving is more rare than the good heart that gives. His mind being ulcerated by constant misfortune Marie-Gaston refused, peremptorily, what pride insisted on calling *alms*. Work, he said, had been provided for him by Daniel d'Arthèz, one of our greatest writers, and the payment for that, added to his own small means, sufficed him. This proud rejection, not properly understood by Dorlange, produced a slight coolness between the two friends; nevertheless, until the year 1833, their intimacy was maintained by a constant exchange of letters. But here, on Marie-Gaston's side, perfect confidence ceased, after a time, to exist. He was hiding something; his proud determination to depend wholly on himself was a sad mistake. Each day brought him nearer to penury. At last, staking all upon one throw, he imprudently involved himself in journalism. Assuming all the risks of an enterprise which amounted to thirty thousand francs, a stroke of ill-fortune left him nothing to look forward to but a debtor's prison, which yawned before him.

It was at this moment that his meeting with Louise de Chaulieu occurred. During the nine months that preceded their marriage, Marie-Gaston's letters to his friend became fewer and far-between. Dorlange ought surely to have been the first to know of this change in the life of his friend, but not one word of

it was confided to him. This was exacted by the high and mighty lady of Gaston's love, Louise de Chaulieu, Baronne de Macumer.

When the time for the marriage came, Madame de Macumer pushed this mania for secrecy to extremes. I, her nearest and dearest friend, was scarcely informed of the event, and no one was admitted to the ceremony except the witnesses required by law. Dorlange was still absent. The correspondence between them ceased, and if Marie-Gaston had entered the convent of *La Trappe*, he could not have been more completely lost to his friend.

When Dorlange returned from Rome in 1836, the sequestration of Marie-Gaston's person and affection was more than ever close and inexorable. Dorlange had too much self-respect to endeavor to pass the barriers thus opposed to him, and the old friends not only never saw each other, but no communication passed between them.

But when the news of Madame Marie-Gaston's death reached him Dorlange forgot all and hastened to Ville d'Avray to comfort his friend. Useless eagerness! Two hours after that sad funeral was over, Marie-Gaston, without a thought for his friends or for a sister-in-law and two nephews who were dependent on him, flung himself into a post-chaise and started for Italy. Dorlange felt that this egotism of sorrow filled the measure of the wrong already done to him; and he endeavoured to efface from his heart even the recollection of a friendship which sympathy under misfortune could not recall.

My husband and I loved Louise de Chaulieu too ten-

derly not to continue our affection for the man who had been so much to her. Before leaving France, Marie-Gaston had requested Monsieur de l'Estorade to take charge of his affairs, and later he sent him a power-of-attorney to enable him to do so properly.

Some weeks ago his grief, still living and active, suggested to him a singular idea. In the midst of the beautiful park at Ville d'Avray is a little lake, with an island upon it which Louise dearly loved. To that island, a shady calm retreat, Marie-Gaston wished to remove the body of his wife, after building a mausoleum of Carrara marble to receive it. He wrote to us to communicate this idea, and, remembering Dorlange in this connection, he requested my husband to see him and ask him to undertake the work. At first Dorlange feigned not to remember even the name of Marie-Gaston, and he made some civil pretext to decline the commission. But see and admire the consistency of such determinations when people love each other! That very evening, being at the opera, he heard the Duc de Rhétoré speak insultingly of his former friend, and he vehemently resented the duke's words. A duel followed in which he was wounded; the news of this affair has probably already reached you. So here is a man facing death at night for a friend whose very name he pretended not to know in the morning!

You will ask, my dear Madame de Camps, what this long tale has to do with my own ridiculous adventure. That is what I would tell you now if my letter were not so immoderately long. I told you my tale would prove to be a feuilleton-story, and I think the moment has come to make the customary break in it. I hope

I have sufficiently exalted your curiosity to have the right not to satisfy it. To be concluded, therefore, whether you like it or not, in the following number.

VI. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE  
DE CAMPS.

PARIS, March, 1839.

The elements of the long biographical dissertation I lately sent you, my dear friend, were taken chiefly from a recent letter from Monsieur Marie-Gaston. On learning of the brave devotion shown in his defence his first impulse was to rush to Paris and press the hand of the friend who avenged himself thus nobly for neglect and forgetfulness. Unfortunately the evening before his departure he met with a dangerous fall at Savarezza, one of the outlying quarries of Carrara, and dislocated his ankle. Being obliged to postpone his journey, he wrote to Monsieur Dorlange to express his gratitude; and, by the same courier, he sent me a voluminous letter, relating the whole past of their life-long friendship and asking me to see Monsieur Dorlange and be the mediator between them. He was not satisfied with the expression of his warm gratitude, he wanted also to show him that in spite of contrary appearances, he had never ceased to deserve the affection of his early friend.

On receiving Monsieur Gaston's letter, my first idea was to write to the sculptor and ask him to come and see me, but finding that he was not entirely recovered from his wound, I went, accompanied by my husband and Naïs, to the artist's studio, which we found in a

pleasant little house in the rue de l'Ouest, behind the garden of the Luxembourg, one of the most retired quarters of Paris. We were received in the vestibule by a woman about whom M. de l'Estorade had already said a word to me. It appears that the *lauréat* of Rome did not leave Italy without bringing away with him an agreeable souvenir in the form of a bourgeoisie Galatea, half housekeeper, half model; about whom certain indiscreet rumors are current. But let me hasten to say that there was absolutely nothing in her appearance or manner to lead me to credit them. In fact, there was something cold and proud and almost savage about her, which is, they tell me a strong characteristic of the Transteverine peasant-women. When she announced our names Monsieur Dorlange was standing in a rather picturesque working costume with his back to us, and I noticed that he hastily drew an ample curtain before the statue on which he was engaged.

At the moment when he turned round, and before I had time to look at him, imagine my astonishment when Naïs ran forward and, with the artlessness of a child, flung her arms about his neck crying out: —

“Arc! here is my monsieur who saved me!”

What! the monsieur who saved her? Then Monsieur Dorlange must be the famous Unknown? — Yes, my dear friend, I now recognized him. Chance, that cleverest of romance-makers, willed that Monsieur Dorlange and my bore were one. Happily, my husband had launched into the expression of his feelings as a grateful father; I thus had time to recover myself, and before it became my turn to say a word, I had



installed upon my face what you are pleased to call my grand l'Estorade air; under which, as you know, I mark twenty-five degrees below zero, and can freeze the words on the lips of any presuming person.

As for Monsieur Dorlange, he seemed to me less troubled than surprised by the meeting. Then, as if he thought we kept him too long on the topic of our gratitude, he abruptly changed the subject.

"Madame," he said to me, "since we are, as it seems, more acquainted than we thought, may I dare to gratify my curiosity?" —

I fancied I saw the claw of a cat preparing to play with its mouse, so I answered, coldly: —

"Artists, I am told, are often indiscreet in their curiosity."

I put a well-marked stiffness into my manner which completed the meaning of the words. I could not see that it baffled him.

"I hope," he replied, "that my question is not of that kind. I only desire to ask if you have a sister."

"No, monsieur," I replied, "I have no sister — none, at least, that I know of," I added, jestingly.

"I thought it not unlikely, however," continued Monsieur Dorlange, in the most natural manner possible; "for the family in which I have met a lady bearing the strongest resemblance to you is surrounded by a certain mysterious atmosphere which renders all suppositions possible."

"Is there any indiscretion in asking the name of that family?"

"Not the least; they are people whom you must have known in Paris in 1829-1830. They lived in

great state and gave fine parties. I myself met them in Italy."

"But their name?" I said.

"De Lanty," he replied, without embarrassment or hesitation.

And, in fact, my dear Madame de Camps, a family of that name did live in Paris about that time, and you probably remember, as I do, that many strange stories were told about them. As Monsieur Dorlange answered my question he turned back towards his veiled statue.

"The sister whom you have not, madame," he said to me abruptly, "I shall permit myself to give you, and I venture to hope that you will see a certain family likeness in her."

So saying, he removed the cloth that concealed his work, and there I stood, under the form of a saint, with a halo round my head. Could I be angry at the liberty thus taken?

My husband and Naïs gave a cry of admiration at the wonderful likeness they had before their eyes. As for Monsieur Dorlange, he at once explained the cause of his scenic effect.

"This statue," he said, "is a Saint-Ursula, ordered by a convent in the provinces. Under circumstances which it would take too long to relate, the type of this saint, the person whom I mentioned just now, was firmly fixed in my memory. I should vainly have attempted to create by my imagination another type for that saint; it could not have been so completely the expression of my thought. I therefore began to model this figure which you see from memory, when

one day, madame, at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, I saw you, and I had the superstition to believe that you were sent to me by Providence. After that, I worked from you only, and as I did not feel at liberty to ask you to come to my studio, the best I could do was to study you when we met, and I multiplied my chances of doing so. I carefully avoided knowing your name and social position; for I feared to bring you down from the ideal and materialize you."

"Oh! I have often seen you following us," said Naïs, with her clever little air.

How little we know children, and their turn for observation! As for my husband, it seemed to me that he ought to have pricked up his ears at this tale of the daring manner in which his wife had been used as a model. Monsieur de l'Estorade is certainly no fool; in all social matters he has the highest sense of conventional propriety, and as for jealousy, I think if I gave him the slightest occasion he would show himself ridiculously jealous. But now, the sight of his "beautiful Renée," as he calls me, done into white marble in the form of a saint, had evidently cast him into a state of admiring ecstacy. He, with Naïs, were taking an inventory to prove the fidelity of the likeness — yes, it was really my attitude, really my eyes, really my mouth, really those two little dimples in my cheeks!

I felt it my duty to take up the rôle that Monsieur de l'Estorade laid aside, so I said, very gravely, to the presuming artist: —

"Do you not think, monsieur, that to appropriate without permission, or — not to mince my words —

al a person's likeness, may seem a very strange proceeding?"

'For that reason, madame," he replied, in a respectful tone, "I was fully determined to abide by your wishes in the matter. Although my statue is fated to be buried in the oratory of a distant convent, I should not have sent it to its destination without obtaining your permission to do so. I could have known your name whenever I wished; I already knew your address; and I intended, when the time came, to confess the liberty I had taken, and ask you to visit my studio. I should then have said what I say now: if the likeness displeases you I can, with a few strokes of my chisel, so change it as to make it unrecognizable."

My husband, who apparently thought the likeness sufficiently close, turned, at this moment, to Monsieur Dorlange, and said, with a delighted air: —

'Do you not think, monsieur, that Madame de Montmorand's nose is rather more delicate than you have made it?"

All this *unexpectedness* so upset me that I felt unable to intervene on behalf of Monsieur Marie-Gaston, and I should, I believe, have pleaded his cause very differently if Monsieur Dorlange had not stopped me at the words I said about it.

'I know, madame," he said, "all that you can possibly tell me about my unfaithful friend. I do not regret, but I forget my wrong. Things having gone so far about that I have nearly lost my life for his sake, it would certainly be very illogical to keep a grudge against him. Still, as regards that mausoleum at Ville d'Avray, nothing would induce me to under-

take it. I have already mentioned to Monsieur de l'Estorade one hindrance that is daily growing more imperative; but besides that, I think it a great pity that Marie-Gaston should thus ruminate on his grief; and I have written to tell him so. He ought to be more of a man, and find in study and in work the consolations we can always find there."

The object of our visit being thus disposed of, I saw no hope of getting to the bottom of the other mystery it had opened, so I rose to take leave, and as I did so Monsieur Dorlange said to me:—

"May I hope that you will not exact the injury I spoke of to my statue?"

"It is for my husband and not for me to reply to that question," I said; "however, we can talk of it later, for Monsieur de l'Estorade hopes that you will give us the honor of a visit."

Monsieur bowed in respectful acquiescence, and we came away, — I, in great ill-humor; I was angry with Naïs, and also with my husband, and felt much inclined to make him a scene, which he would certainly not have understood.

Now what do you think of all this? Is the man a clever swindler, who invented that fable for some purpose, or is he really an artist, who took me in all simplicity of soul for the living realization of his idea? That is what I intend to find out in the course of a few days, for now I am committed to your programme, and to-morrow Monsieur and Madame de l'Estorade will have the honor of inviting Monsieur Dorlange to dinner.

## VII. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME

OCTAVE DE CAMPS.

PARIS, March, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Monsieur Dorlange dined with us to-day. My intention was to invite him alone to a family dinner, so as to have him more completely under my eye, and put him to the question at my ease. But Monsieur de l'Estorade, to whom I had not explained my charitable motives, showed me that such an invitation might wound the sensibilities of our guest; it might seem to him that the Comte de l'Estorade thought the sculptor Dorlange unfitted for the society of his friends.

'We can't,' said my husband gayly, 'treat him like the sons of our farmers who come here with the epaulet and lieutenant on their shoulder, and whom we invite to closed doors because we can't send them to the servants' hall.'

We therefore invited to meet him Monsieur Joseph Beauclau, the painter, the Chevalier d'Espard, Monsieur de la Bastie (formerly, you remember, demoiselle Modeste Mignon) and the Marquis de Querolles. When my husband invited the latter, he asked him if he had any objection to meeting the secretary of the Duc de Rhétoré.

'So far from objecting,' replied Monsieur de Querolles, 'I am glad of the opportunity to meet a man of talent, who in the affair you speak of behaved admirably.' And he added, after my husband had told me of our great obligation to Monsieur Dorlange,

"Then he is a true hero, your sculptor! if he goes on this way, we can't hold a candle to him."

In his studio, with a bare throat leaving his head, which is rather too large for his body, free, and dressed in a sort of Oriental costume, Monsieur Dorlange looked to me a great deal better than he does in regular evening dress. Though I must say that when he grows animated in speaking his face lights up, a sort of a magnetic essence flows from his eyes which I had already noticed in our preceding encounters. Madame de la Bastie was as much struck as I was by this peculiarity.

I don't know if I told you that the ambition of Monsieur Dorlange is to be returned to the Chamber at the coming elections. This was the reason he gave for declining Monsieur Gaston's commission. What Monsieur de l'Estorade and I thought, at first, to be a mere excuse was an actual reason. At table when Monsieur Joseph Bridau asked him point-blank what belief was to be given to the report of his parliamentary intentions, Monsieur Dorlange formally announced them; from that moment, throughout the dinner, the talk was exclusively on politics.

When it came to topics foreign to his studies, I expected to find our artist, if not a novice, at least very slightly informed. Not at all. On men, on things, on the past as on the future of parties, he had very clear and really novel views, which were evidently not borrowed from the newspapers; and he put them forth in lively, easy, and elegant language; so that after his departure Monsieur de Ronquerolles and Monsieur de l'Estorade declared themselves positively

surprised at the strong and powerful political attitude he had taken. This admission was all the more remarkable because, as you know, the two gentlemen are zealous conservatives, whereas Monsieur Dorlange inclines in a marked degree to democratic principles.

This unexpected superiority in my problematical follower reassured me not a little; still, I was resolved to get to the bottom of the situation, and therefore, after dinner I drew him into one of those tête-à-têtes which the mistress of a house can always bring about.

After talking awhile about Monsieur Marie-Gaston, our mutual friend, the enthusiasms of my dear Louise and my efforts to moderate them, I asked him how soon he intended to send his Saint-Ursula to her destination.

"Everything is ready for her departure," he replied, "but I want your *exeat*, madame; will you kindly tell me if you desire me to change her expression?"

"One question in the first place," I replied: "Will your work suffer by such a change, supposing that I desire it?"

"Probably. If you cut the wings of a bird you hinder its flight."

"Another question: Is it I, or the *other person* whom the statue best represents?"

"You, madame; that goes without saying, for you are the present, she the past."

"But, to desert the past for the present is a bad thing and goes by a bad name, monsieur; and yet you proclaim it with a very easy air."

"True," said Monsieur Dorlange, laughing, "but



art is ferocious; wherever it sees material for its creations, it pounces upon it desperately."

"Art," I replied, "is a great word under which a multitude of things shelter themselves. The other day you told me that circumstances, too long to relate at that moment, had contributed to fix the image of which I was the reflection in your mind, where it has left a vivid memory; was not that enough to excite my curiosity?"

"It was true, madame, that time did not allow of my making an explanation of those circumstances; but, in any case, having the honor of speaking to you for the first time, it would have been strange, would it not, had I ventured to make you any confidences?"

"Well, but now?" I said, boldly.

"Now, unless I receive more express encouragement, I am still unable to suppose that anything in my past can interest you."

"Why not? Some acquaintances ripen fast. Your devotion to my Naïs has advanced our friendship rapidly. Besides," I added, with affected levity, "I am passionately fond of stories."

"But mine has no conclusion to it; it is an enigma even to myself."

"All the better; perhaps between us we might find the key to it."

Monsieur Dorlange appeared to take counsel with himself; then, after a short pause he said:—

"It is true that women are admirably fitted to seize the lighter shades of meaning in acts and sentiments which we men are unable to decipher. But this confidence does not concern myself alone; I should have

to request that it remain absolutely between ourselves, not even excepting Monsieur de l'Estorade from this restriction. A secret is never safe beyond the person who confides it, and the person who hears it."

I was much puzzled, as you can well suppose, about what might follow; still, continuing my explorations, I replied:—

"Monsieur de l'Estorade is so little in the habit of hearing everything from me, that he never even read a line of my correspondence with Madame Marie-Gaston."

Until then, Monsieur Dorlange had stood before the fireplace, at one corner of which I was seated; but he now took a chair beside me and said, by way of preamble:—

"I mentioned to you, madame, the family of Lanty —"

At that instant—provoking as rain in the midst of a picnic—Madame de la Bastie came up to ask me if I had been to see Nathan's last drama. Monsieur Dorlange was forced to give up his seat beside me, and no further opportunity for renewing the conversation occurred during the evening.

I have really, as you see now, no light upon the matter, and yet when I recall the whole manner and behavior of Monsieur Dorlange, whom I studied carefully, my opinion inclines to his perfect innocence. Nothing proves that the love I suspected plays any part in this curious affair; and I will allow you to think that I and my terrors, with which I tormented you, were terribly absurd,—in short, that I have played the part of Bélise in the *Femmes Savantes*,

who fancies that every man she sees is fatally in love with her.

I therefore cheerfully abandon that stupid conclusion. Lover or not, Monsieur Dorlange is a man of high character, with rare distinction of mind; and if, as I believe now, he has no misplaced pretensions, it is an honor and pleasure to count him among our friends. Naïs is enchanted with her preserver. After he left us that evening, she said to me, with an amusing little air of approbation, —

“Mamma, how well Monsieur Dorlange talks.”

Apropos of Naïs, here is one of her remarks:—

“When he stopped the horses, mamma, and you did not seem to notice him, I thought he was only a man.”

“How do you mean, — only a man?”

“Well, yes! one of those persons to whom one pays no attention. But, oh! I was so glad when I found out he was a monsieur. Did n’t you hear me cry out, ‘Ah! you are the monsieur who saved me’?”

Though her innocence is perfect, there was such pride and vanity in this little speech that I gave her, as you may well suppose, a lecture upon it. This distinction of man and monsieur is dreadful; but, after all, the child told the truth. She only said, with her blunt simplicity, what our democratic customs still allow us to put in practice, though they forbid us to put it into words. The Revolution of ’89 has at least introduced that virtuous hypocrisy into our social system.

But I refrain from politics.

VIII. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME  
OCTAVE DE CAMPS.

April, 1839.

For the last two weeks we have heard nothing more of Monsieur Dorlange. Not only has he not seen fit to renew the conversation so provokingly interrupted by Madame de la Bastie, but he has not even remembered that it was proper to leave his card at the house after a dinner.

While we were breakfasting yesterday morning, I happened to make this remark (though without any sharpness), and just then our Lucas, who, as an old servant, sometimes allows himself a little familiarity, had the door swung triumphantly open to admit him, bearing *something*, I knew not what, wrapped in tissue paper, which he deposited with great care on the table, giving a note to Monsieur de l'Estorade at the same time.

"What is that?" I said to Lucas, on whose face I detected the signs of a "surprise," at the same time putting out my hand to uncover the mysterious article.

"Oh! madame must be careful!" cried Lucas; "it is fragile."

During this time my husband had read the note, which he now passed to me, saying:—

"Read it. Monsieur Dorlange sends us an excuse."

The note said:—

MONSIEUR LE COMTE, — I think I observed that Madame la comtesse granted me rather reluctantly her permission to profit by the audacious larceny I committed at her expense. I have, therefore, taken upon myself to change the character

of my statue, and, at the present moment, the *two sisters* no longer resemble each other. Nevertheless, as I did not wish that *all* should be lost to the world, I modelled the head of Saint-Ursula before retouching it. From that model I have now made a reduction, which I place upon the charming shoulders of a countess not yet canonized, thank God! The mould was broken as soon as the one cast, which I have now the honor of sending you, was made. This fact may, perhaps, give some little additional value to the bust in your eyes.

Accept, Monsieur le comte, etc., etc.

While I was reading the note, my husband, Lucas, René, and Naïs had eagerly extracted me from my swathings, and then, in truth, I appeared no longer a saint, but a woman of the world. I really thought my husband and children would go out of their minds with admiration and pleasure. The news of this masterpiece spread about the house, and all our servants, whom we rather spoil, came flocking, one after another, as if sent for, crying out, "Oh, it is madame's own self!" I alone did not share in the general enthusiasm. As for Monsieur de l'Estorade, after working for an hour to find a place in his own study where the bust could be seen in its best light, he came in to say to me:—

"On my way to the Treasury to-day I shall go and see Monsieur Dorlange, and if he is at liberty this evening I shall ask him to dine with us. To-day is Armand's half-holiday, and I would like him to see the boy. The assembled family can then thank him for his gift."

Monsieur Dorlange accepted the invitation. At dinner Monsieur de l'Estorade inquired further about

his candidacy, giving it however, no approval. This led straight to politics. Armand, whose mind is naturally grave and reflective and who reads the newspapers, mingled in the conversation. Against the practice of youths of the present day, he thinks like his father; that is, he is very conservative; though perhaps less just and wise, as might well be expected in a lad of fifteen. He was consequently led to contradict Monsieur Dorlange, whose inclination as I told you, is somewhat jacobin. And I must say I thought the arguments of my little man neither bad nor ill-expressed. Without ceasing to be polite, Monsieur Dorlange had an air of disdaining a discussion with the poor boy, so much so that I saw Armand on the point of losing patience and replying sharply. However, as he has been well brought up, I had only to make him a sign and he controlled himself; but seeing him turn scarlet and shut himself up in gloomy silence, I felt that his pride had received a blow, and I thought it little generous in Monsieur Dorlange to crush a young lad in that way.

I know very well that children in these days make the mistake of wishing to be personages before their time, and that it often does them good to suppress such conceit. But really, Armand has an intellectual development and a power of reasoning beyond his age. Do you want a proof of it? Until last year, I had never consented to part with him, and it was only as a day scholar that he followed his course of study at the College Henri IV. Well, he himself, for the sake of his studies, which were hindered by going and coming to and fro, asked to be placed in the regular manner

in the school; and he employed more entreaties and arguments with me to put him under that discipline than an ordinary boy would have used to escape it. Therefore this manly air and manner, which in most schoolboys would, of course, be intolerably ridiculous, seems in him the result of his natural precocity; and this precocity ought to be forgiven him, inasmuch as it comes to him from God.

In consequence of his unfortunate birth Monsieur Dorlange is less fitted than most men to judge of children in their homes, and he therefore, necessarily, shows a want of indulgence. But he had better take care; if he wishes to pay court to me merely as a friend he has chosen a very bad method of doing so.

Of course an evening in the midst of the family did not allow of his returning to the subject of his private history; but I thought he did not show any particular desire to do so. In fact, he occupied himself much more with Naïs than with me, cutting out silhouettes in black paper for her during nearly the whole evening. I must also mention that Madame de Rastignac came in and I, on my side, was obliged to give my company to her. While we were conversing near the fire, Monsieur Dorlange at the other end of the room was posing the two children Naïs and René, who presently brought me their likenesses snipped out with scissors, Naïs whispering triumphantly in my ear:—

“You don’t know; but Monsieur Dorlange is going to make my bust in marble.”

Since this family dinner, civil war has been declared among my children. Naïs extols to the skies her “dear preserver,” as she calls him, and is supported in her

opinion by René, who is delivered over to the sculptor body and soul in return for a superb lancer on horse-back which Monsieur Dorlange cut out for him. Armand, on the contrary, thinks him ugly, which is undeniable; he says he resembles the portraits of Danton which he has seen in the illustrated histories of the Revolution, in which remark there is some truth. He says also that Monsieur Dorlange has given me in my bust the air of a grisette, which is not true at all. Hence, disputes among my darlings which are endless.

IX. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON.

PARIS, April, 1839.

Why do I desert my art, and what do I intend to do in this cursed galley of politics? This shows what it is, my dear romantic friend, to shut one's self up for years in a conjugal convent. During that time the world has progressed. To friends forgotten at the gate life brings new combinations; and the more they are ignored, the more disposed the forgetter is to cast the blame upon those forgotten; it is so easy to preach to others!

Learn, then, my dear inquisitor, that I do not enter politics of my own volition. In pushing myself in this unexpected manner into the electoral breach, I merely follow an inspiration that has been made to me. A ray of light has come into my darkness; a father has partly revealed himself, and, if I may believe appearances, he holds a place in the world which ought to satisfy the most exacting ambition. This revelation, considering the very ordinary course of my life, has



come to me surrounded by fantastic and romantic circumstances which deserve to be related to you in some detail.

As you have lived in Italy, I think it useless to explain to you the *Café Greco*, the usual rendezvous of the pupils of the Academy and the artists of all countries who flock to Rome. In Paris, rue de Coq-Saint-Honoré, we have a distant counterpart of that institution in a café long known as that of the *Café des Arts*. Two or three times a week I spend an evening there, where I meet several of my contemporaries in the French Academy in Rome. They have introduced me to a number of journalists and men of letters, all of them amiable and distinguished men, with whom there is both profit and pleasure in exchanging ideas.

In a certain corner, where we gather, many questions of a nature to interest serious minds are debated; but the most eager interest, namely politics, takes the lead in our discussions. In this little club the prevailing opinion is democratic; it is represented under all its aspects, the phalansterian Utopia not excepted. That's enough to tell you that before this tribunal the ways of the government are often judged with severity, and that the utmost liberty of language reigns in our discussions. The consequence is that about a year ago the waiter who serves us habitually took me aside one day to give me, as he said, a timely warning.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are watched by the police; and you would do well not to talk like Saint Paul, open-mouthed."

"The police! my good friend," I replied, "why the

devil should the police watch me? What I say, and a good deal else, is printed every morning in the newspapers."

"No matter for that, they *are* watching you. I have seen it. There is a little old man, who takes a great deal of snuff, who is always within hearing distance of you; when you speak he seems to pay more attention to your words than to those of the others; and once I saw him write something down in a note-book in marks that were not writing."

"Well, the next time he comes, point him out to me."

The next time proved to be the next day. The person shown to me was a short man with gray hair, a rather neglected person and a face deeply pitted with the small-pox, which seemed to make him out about fifty years of age. He frequently dipped in a large snuffbox; and seemed to be giving to my remarks an attention I might consider either flattering or inquisitive, as I pleased; but a certain air of gentleness and integrity in this supposed police-spy inclined me to the kinder interpretation. I said so to the waiter, who had plumed himself on discovering a spy.

"*Parbleu!*" he replied, "they always put on that honeyed manner to hide their game."

Two days later, on a Sunday, at the hour of vespers, in one of my rambles about old Paris — for which, as you know, I always had a taste — I happened to enter the church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, the parish church of the remote quarter of the city which bears that name. This church is a building of very little interest, no matter what historians and certain "Guides to Paris"

may say. I should therefore have passed rapidly through it if the remarkable talent of the organist who was performing part of the service had not induced me to remain.

To say that the playing of that man realized my ideal is giving it high praise, for I dare say you will remember that I always distinguished between organ-players and organists, a superior order of nobility the title of which is not to be given unwittingly.

The service over, I had a curiosity to see the face of so eminent an artist buried in that out-of-the-way place. Accordingly I posted myself near the door of the organ loft, to see him as he left the church — a thing I certainly would not have done for a crowned head; but great artists, after all, are they not kings by divine right?

Imagine my amazement when, after waiting a few minutes, instead of seeing a totally unknown face I saw that of a man in whom I recognized my listener at the Café des Arts. But that is not all: behind him came the semblance of a human being in whose crooked legs and bushy tangled hair I recognized my old tri-monthly providence, my banker, the *money-bringer*, — in a word my worthy friend, the mysterious dwarf.

I did not escape, myself, his vigilant eye, and I saw him point me out to the organist with an eager gesture. The latter turned hastily to look at me and then, without further demonstration, continued his way. Meantime the bandy-legged creature went up familiarly to the giver of holy-water and offered him a pinch of snuff; then without paying any further attention to me, he limped to a low door at the side of the church and

disappeared. The evident pains this deformed being had taken to fix the organist's attention upon me seemed to me a revelation. Evidently, the *maestro* knew of the singular manner by which my quarterly stipend reached me; which stipend, I should tell you, had been regularly continued until my orders for work so increased as to put me beyond all necessity. It was not improbable therefore that this man, who listened to me at the Café des Arts, was the repository of other secrets relating to my early life; and I became most eager to obtain an explanation from him; all the more because, as I was now living on my own resources, my curiosity could not be punished, as formerly threatened, by the withdrawal of my subsidy.

Making my decision quickly, I followed the organist at once; but by the time I reached the door of the church he was out of sight. However, my luck prompted me to follow the direction he had taken, and as I reached the quai de Béthune I saw him to my great joy rapping at the door of a house. Entering resolutely after him, I asked the porter for the organist of Saint-Louis-de-l'Île.

“Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau?”

“Yes; Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau; he lives here I believe.”

“Fourth floor above the entresol, door to the left. He has just come in, and you can overtake him on the stairs.”

Rapidly as I ran up, my man had the key of his door already in the lock when I reached him.

“Have I the honor of speaking to Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau?” I asked.

“Don’t know any such person,” he replied with effrontery, unlocking his door.

“Perhaps I pronounce the name incorrectly ; I mean the organist of Saint-Louis-de-l’Île.”

“I have never heard of any organist in this house.”

“Pardon me, monsieur, there is one, for the concierge has just told me so. Besides I saw you leave the organ loft of that church followed by an individual who —”

Before I could finish my sentence this singular individual cut short our interview by entering his apartment and locking the door behind him. For a moment I thought that I must have been mistaken ; but on reflection I saw that a mistake was impossible. I had to do with a man who, for years, had proved his unremitting discretion. No, he was obstinately bent on avoiding me ; I was not mistaken in recognizing him.

I then began to pull the bell vigorously, being quite resolved to get some answer at least to my demand. For some little time the besieged took the racket I made patiently ; then, all of a sudden, I noticed that the bell had ceased to ring. Evidently, the wire was disconnected ; the besieged was secure, unless I kicked in the door ; but that of course, was not altogether the thing to do.

I returned to the porter and, without giving the reasons for my discomfiture, I told him about it. In that way I won his confidence and so obtained some little information about the impenetrable Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau. Though readily given, this information did not enlighten me at all as to the actual

situation. Bricheteau was said to be a quiet lodger, civil, but not communicative; though punctual in paying his rent, his means seemed small; he kept no servant and took his meals out of the house. Going out every morning before ten o'clock, he seldom came in before night; the inference was that he was either a clerk in some office, or that he gave music lessons in private houses.

One detail alone in the midst of this vague and useless information was of interest. For the last few months Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau had received a voluminous number of letters the postage on which indicated that they came from foreign parts; but, in spite of his desires, the worthy concierge had never, he said, been able to decipher the post-mark. Thus this detail, which might have been very useful to me became for the moment absolutely worthless.

I returned home, persuading myself that a pathetic letter addressed to the refractory Bricheteau would induce him to receive me. Mingling with my entreaties the touch of a threat, I let him know that I was firmly resolved at all costs to get to the bottom of the mystery which weighed upon my life; the secret of which he evidently knew. The next morning, before nine o'clock, I went to his house, only to learn that after paying the rent to the end of his term, he had packed up his furniture and left the house in the early morning, without the porter being able to discover from the men who removed his property (well-paid to keep silence, no doubt) where they were ordered to carry it. These men being strangers in the quarter, it was quite impossible to discover them later.

I felt, however, that I still had a clue to him, through the organ at Saint-Louis, and the following Sunday after high mass I posted myself as before at the door of the organ loft, determined not to let go of the sphinx until I had made him speak. But here again, disappointment! Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau's place was taken by a pupil. The same thing happened on the three following Sundays. On the fourth, I accosted the pupil and asked him if the master were ill.

"No, monsieur," he replied. "Monsieur Bricheteau has asked for leave of absence. He will be absent for some time; I believe on business."

"Where, then, can I write to him?"

"I don't rightly know; but I think you had better address your letter to his house; not far from here, quai de Béthune."

"But he has moved; did n't you know it?"

"No, indeed; where does he live now?"

This was poor luck; to ask information of a man who asked it of me when I questioned him. As if to put me quite beside myself while I was making these inquiries, I saw that damned dwarf in the distance evidently laughing at me.

Happily for my patience and my curiosity, which, under the pressure of all this opposition was growing terrible, a certain amount of light was given me. A few days after my last discomfiture, a letter reached me bearing the post-mark Stockholm, Sweden; which address did not surprise me because, while in Rome, I had been honored by the friendship of Thorwaldsen, the great Swedish sculptor, and I had often met in his studio many of his compatriots. Probably, therefore,

this letter conveyed an order from one of them, sent through Thorwaldsen. But, on opening the letter what was my amazement, and my emotion, in presence of its opening words : —

“Monsieur, my son —”

The letter was long. I had no patience to read it until I knew the name I bore. I turned to the signature; again my disappointment was complete — there was no name!

“MONSIEUR MY SON,” said my anonymous father, — “I do not regret that by your passionate insistence on knowing the secret of your birth, you have forced the person who has watched over you from childhood to come here to confer with me as to the course your vehement and dangerous curiosity requires us to pursue.

“For some time past, I have entertained a thought which I bring to maturity to-day; the execution of which could have been more satisfactorily settled by word of mouth than it can now be by correspondence.

“Immediately after your birth, which cost your mother’s life, being forced to expatriate myself, I made in a foreign country a noble fortune, and I occupy in the ministry of that country an eminent position. I foresee the moment when, free to restore to you my name, I shall also be able to secure to you the inheritance of my titles and the position to which I have attained.

“But, to reach that height, the reputation you have, I am told, acquired in art is not a sufficient recommendation. It is my wish that you should enter



political life; and in that career, under the present institutions of France, there are not two ways of becoming a man of distinction: you must begin by being made a deputy. I know that you are not yet of the legal age, and also that you do not possess the property qualification. But, in another year you will be thirty years old, and that is just the necessary time required by law to be a land-owner before becoming a candidate for election.

“To-morrow, therefore, you can present yourself to Mongenod Bros., bankers, rue de la Victoire. A sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs will be paid to you; this you must immediately employ in the purchase of real estate, applying part of the surplus to obtain an interest in some newspaper which, when the right time comes, will support your candidacy, and the rest in another expense I shall presently explain to you.

“Your political aptitude is guaranteed to me by the person who, with a disinterested zeal for which I shall ever be grateful, has watched over you since you were abandoned. For some time past he has secretly followed you and listened to you, and he is certain that you will make yourself a dignified position in the Chamber. Your opinions of ardent yet moderate liberalism please me; without being aware of it, you have very cleverly played into my game. I cannot as yet tell you the place of your probable election. The secret power which is preparing for that event is all the more certain to succeed because its plans are pursued quietly and for the present in the shade. But success will be greatly assisted by the execution of a

work which I shall now propose to you, requesting you to accept its apparent strangeness without surprise or comment.

“For the time being you must continue to be a sculptor, and with the talents of which you have already given proofs, I wish you to make a statue of Saint-Ursula. That is a subject which does not lack either interest or poesy. Saint-Ursula, virgin and martyr, was, as is generally believed, a daughter of a prince of Great Britain. Becoming the abbess of a convent of unmarried women, who were called with popular naïveté the Eleven Thousand Virgins, she was martyred by the Huns in the fifth century; later, she was patroness of the order of the Ursulines, to which she gave its name, and she was also patroness of the famous house of Sorbonne. An able artist like yourself could, it seems to me, make much of these details.

“Without knowing the locality of which you will be made the representative, it is expedient that you should from the present moment, make known your political opinions and your intention of becoming a candidate for election. But I cannot too strongly insist on your keeping secret the communication now made to you; at any rate as much as your patience will allow. Leave my agent in peace, and await the slow and quiet development of the brilliant future to which you are destined, without yielding to a curiosity which might, I warn you, lead to great disasters.

“If you refuse to enter my plans, you will take from yourself all chance of ever penetrating a mystery which you have shown yourself so eager to understand. But I do not admit even the supposition of your resist-

ance, and I prefer to believe in your deference to the wishes of a father who will regard it as the finest day of his life when at last it be granted to him to reveal himself to his son.

“P. S. Your statue, which is intended for a convent of Ursuline nuns, must be in white marble. Height: one metre seven hundred and six millimetres; in other words, five feet three inches. As it will not be placed in a niche, you must carefully finish all sides of it. The costs of the work are to be taken out of the two hundred and fifty thousand francs mentioned above.”

This letter chilled and pained me. In the first place, it took from me a hope long cherished, — that of recovering a mother as loving as yours, of whose adorable tenderness, dear friend, you have so often told me. After all, it was a half-light thrown upon the fogs of my life without even allowing me to know whether I was or was not the child of a legitimate marriage. It also seemed to me that such paternal intimations addressed to a man of my age were much too despotic and imperious. Was it not a strange proceeding to change my whole life as if I were a boy just leaving school! At first I employed to myself all the arguments against this political vocation which you and my other friends have since addressed to me. Nevertheless curiosity impelled me to go to the Mongenods'; and finding there, sure enough, in actual, living money, the two hundred and fifty thousand francs announced to me, I was led to reason in another way.

I reflected that a will which began by making such an outlay must have something serious in it. And

inasmuch as this mysterious father knew all and I nothing, it seemed to me that to enter on a struggle with him was neither reasonable nor opportune. In fact, had I any real repugnance to the career suggested to me? No. Political interests have always roused me to a certain degree; and if my electoral attempt should come to nothing, I could always return to my art without being more ridiculous than the other still-born ambitions which each new legislature produces.

Accordingly, I have bought the necessary piece of property, and made myself a shareholder in the "National." I have also made the Saint-Ursula, and am now awaiting instructions, which seem to me rather long in coming, as to her actual destination. Moreover, I have made known my parliamentary ambition, and the fact that I intend to stand in the coming elections.

I need not ask you to preserve the utmost secrecy about my present confidence. Discretion is a virtue which you practise, to my knowledge, in too signal a manner to need any exhorting thereto from me. But I am wrong, dear friend, in making these unkind allusions to the past, for at this moment I am, more perhaps than you know, the obliged party. Partly out of interest in me, but more because of the general aversion your ex-brother-in-law's extreme haughtiness inspires, the democratic party has flocked to my door to make inquiries about my wound, and the talk and excitement about this duel have served me well; there is no doubt that my candidacy has gained much ground. Therefore, I say, a truce to your gratitude; do you not see how much I owe to you?

X. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON.

PARIS, April, 1839.

DEAR FRIEND, — For better or for worse, I continue my candidacy without a constituency to elect me. This surprises my friends and worries me, for it is only a few weeks now to the general election ; and if it happens that all this mysterious “ preparation ” comes to nought, a pretty figure I shall cut in the caricatures of Monsieur Bixiou, of whose malicious remarks on the subject you lately wrote me.

One thing reassures me : it does not seem likely that any one would have sown two hundred and fifty thousand francs in my electoral furrow without feeling pretty sure of gathering a harvest. Perhaps, to take a cheerful view of the matter, this very slowness may be considered as showing great confidence of success.

However that may be, I am kept by this long delay in a state of inaction which weighs upon me. Astride as it were of two existences,— one in which I have not set foot, the other in which my foot still lingers, — I have no heart to undertake real work ; I am like a traveller who, having arrived before the hour when the diligence starts, does not know what to do with his person nor how to spend his time. You will not complain, I think, that I turn this enforced *far niente* to the profit of our correspondence ; and now that I am thus at leisure, I shall take up two points in your last letter which did not seem to me of sufficient importance to pay much attention to at the time : I refer to your warning that my parliamentary preten-

sions did not meet the approval of Monsieur Bixiou; and to your suggestion that I might expose myself to falling in love with Madame de l'Estorade — if I were not in love with her already. Let us discuss, in the first instance, Monsieur Bixiou's grand disapprobation — just as we used to talk in the olden time of the grand treachery of Monsieur de Mirabeau.

I'll describe that man to you in a single word, Envy. In Monsieur Bixiou there is, unquestionably, the makings of a great artist; but in the economy of his existence the belly has annihilated the heart and the head, and he is now and forever under the dominion of sensual appetites; he is riveted to the condition of a *caricaturist*, — that is to say, to the condition of a man who from day to day discounts himself in petty products, regular galley-slave pot-boilers, which, to be sure, give him a lively living, but in themselves are worthless and have no future. With talents misused and now impotent, he has in his mind, as he has on his face, that everlasting and despairing *grin* which human thought instinctively attributes to fallen angels. Just as the Spirit of darkness attacks, in preference, great saints because they recall to him most bitterly the angelic nature from which he has fallen, so Monsieur Bixiou delights to slaver the talents and characters of those who he sees have courageously refused to squander their strength, sap, and aims as he has done.

But the thing which ought to reassure you somewhat as to the danger of his calumny and his slander (for he employs both forms of backbiting) is that at the very time when he believes he is making a burlesque

autopsy of me he is actually an obedient puppet whose wire I hold in my hands, and whom I am making talk as I please. Being convinced that a certain amount of noisy discussion would advance my political career, I looked about me for what I may call a public crier. Among these circus trumpets, if I could have found one with a sharper tone, a more deafening blare than Bixiou's, I would have chosen it. As it was, I have profited by the malevolent curiosity which induces that amiable lepidopter to insinuate himself into all studios. I confided the whole affair to him; even to the two hundred and fifty thousand francs (which I attributed to a lucky stroke at the Bourse), I told him all my plans of parliamentary conduct, down to the number of the house I have bought to conform to the requirements of the electoral law. It is all jotted down in his notebook.

That statement, I think, would somewhat reduce the admiration of his hearers in the salon Montcornet did they know of it. As for the political horoscope which he has been so kind as to draw for me, I cannot honestly say that his astrology is at fault. It is very certain that with my intention of following no set of fixed opinions, I must reach the situation so admirably summed up by the lawyer of Monsieur de la Palisse, when he exclaimed with burlesque emphasis: "What do you do, gentlemen, when you place a man in solitude? You isolate him."

Isolation will certainly be my lot, and the artist-life, in which a man lives alone and draws from himself like the Gréat Creator whose work he toils to imitate, has predisposed me to welcome the situation. But

although, in the beginning especially, it will deprive me of all influence in the lobbies, it may serve me well in the tribune, where I shall be able to speak with strength and *freedom*. Being bound by no promises and by no party trammels, nothing will prevent me from being the man I am, and expressing, in all their sacred crudity, the ideas which I think sound and just. I know very well that before an audience plain, honest truth may fail to be contagious or even welcome. But have you never remarked that, by using our opportunities wisely, we finally meet with days which may be called the festivals of morality and intelligence, days on which, naturally and almost without effort, the thought of good triumphs?

I do not, however, conceal from myself that, although I may reach to some reputation as an orator, such a course will never lead to a ministry, and that it does not bestow that reputation of being a practical man to which it is now the fashion to sacrifice so much. But if at arm's length in the tribune I have but little influence, I shall make my mark at a greater distance. I shall speak as it were from a window, beyond the close and narrow sphere of parliamentary discussion, and above the level of its petty passions and its petty interests. This species of success appears to meet the views of the mysterious paternal intentions towards me. What they seem to require is that I shall sound and resound. From that point of view, i' faith, politics have a poetic side which is not out of keeping with my past life.

Now, to take up your other warning: that of my passion born or to be born for Madame de l'Estorade.



I quote your most judicious deductions for the purpose of answering them fully.

In 1837, when you left for Italy, Madame de l'Estorade was, you say, in the flower of her beauty ; and the queer, audacious persistence which I have shown in deriving inspiration from her shows that it has not faded. Hence, if the evil be not already done, you warn me to be on my guard ; from the admiration of an artist to the adoration of the man there is but a step, and the history of the late Pygmalion is commended to my study.

In the first place, learned doctor and mythologist, allow me this remark. Being on the spot and therefore much better placed than you to judge of the dangers of the situation, I can assure you that the principal person concerned does not appear to feel the least anxiety. Monsieur de l'Estorade quarrels with me for one thing only : he thinks my visits too few, and my reserve misanthropy.

*Parbleu !* I hear you say, a husband is always the last to know that his wife is being courted. So be it. But the high renown of Madame de l'Estorade's virtue, her cold and rather calculating good sense, which often served to balance the ardent and passionate impetuosity of one you knew well, — what of that ? And will you not grant that motherhood as it appears in that lady — pushed to a degree of fervor which I might almost call fanaticism — would be to her an infallible preservative ?

So much for her. But it is not, I see, for her tranquillity, it is mine for which your friendship is concerned ; if Pygmalion had not succeeded in giving life

to his statue, a pretty life his love would have made him!

To your charitable solicitude I must answer, (1) by asserting my principles (though the word and the thing are utterly out of date); (2) by a certain stupid respect that I feel for conjugal loyalty; (3) by the natural preoccupation which the serious public enterprise I am about to undertake must necessarily give to my mind and imagination. I must also tell you that I belong, if not by spiritual height, at least by all the tendencies of my mind and character, to that strong and serious school of artists of another age who, finding that art is long and life is short — *ars longa et vita brevis* — did not commit the mistake of wasting their time and lessening their powers of creation by silly and insipid intrigues.

But I have a better reason still to offer you. As Monsieur de l'Estorade has told you of the really romantic incidents of my first meeting with his wife, you know already that a *memory* was the cause of my studying her as a model. Well, that memory, while it attracted me to the beautiful countess, is the strongest of all reasons to keep me from her. This appears to you, I am sure, sufficiently enigmatical and far-fetched; but wait till I explain it.

If you had not thought proper to break the thread of our intercourse, I should not to-day be obliged to take up the arrears of our confidence; as it is, my dear boy, you must now take your part in my past history and listen to me bravely.

In 1835, the last year of my stay in Rome, I became quite intimate with a comrade in the Academy named

Desroziers. He was a musician and a man of distinguished and very observing mind, who would probably have gone far in his art if malarial fever had not put an end to him the following year. Suddenly the idea took possession of us to go to Sicily, one of the excursions permitted by the rules of the school; but as we were radically "dry," as they say, we walked about Rome for some time endeavoring to find some means of recruiting our finances. On one of these occasions we happened to pass before the Palazzo Braschi. Its wide-open doors gave access to the passing and repassing of a crowd of persons of all sorts.

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Desroziers, "here's the very thing for us."

And without explaining his words or where he was taking me, he made me follow the crowd and enter the palace.

After mounting a magnificent marble staircase and crossing a very long suite of apartments rather poorly furnished, — which is customary in Italian palaces, all their luxury being put into ceilings, statues, paintings, and other objects of art, — we reached a room that was wholly hung with black and lighted by quantities of tapers. It was, of course, a *chambre-ardente*. In the middle of it on a raised platform surmounted by a baldaquin, lay a *thing*, the most hideous and grotesque thing you can possibly conceive. Imagine a little old man whose hands and face had reached such a stage of emaciation that a mummy would have seemed to you in comparison plump and comely.

Clothed in black satin breeches, a violet velvet coat cut à la *Française*, a white waistcoat embroidered in

gold, from which issued an enormous shirt-frill of point d'Angleterre, this skeleton had cheeks covered with a thick layer of rouge which heightened still further the parchment tones of the rest of his skin. Upon his head was a blond wig frizzed into innumerable little curls, surmounted by an immense plumed hat jauntily perched to one side in a manner which irresistibly provoked the laughter of even the most respectful visitors.

After one glance given to this ridiculous and lamentable exhibition, — an obligatory part of all funerals, according to the etiquette of the Roman aristocracy, — Desroziers exclaimed: "There's the end; now come and see the beginning."

Not replying to any of my questions, because he was arranging a dramatic effect, he took me to the Albani gallery and placed me before a statue representing Adonis stretched on a lion's skin.

"What do you think of that?" he said.

"What?" I replied at a first glance; "why, it is as fine as an antique."

"Antique as much as I am!" replied Desroziers. "It is a portrait in youth of that wizened old being we have just seen dead."

"Antique or not, it is a masterpiece," I said. "But how is all this beauty, or its hideous caricature, to get us to Sicily? That is the question."

"I'll tell you," replied Desroziers. "I know the family of that old scarecrow. His niece married the Comte de Lanty, and they have long wanted to buy this statue which the Albani museum won't give up at any price. They have tried to have it copied, but they

never got anything satisfactory. Now, you know the director of the museum well. Get him to let you make a copy of it. I give music-lessons to the Comte de Lanty's daughter, Mademoiselle Marianina, and I'll talk of your copy. If you succeed, as of course you will, the count will buy it and pay you forty times the cost of a trip to Sicily."

Two days later I began the work, and, as it suited my taste, I worked so hotly at it that by the end of three weeks the Lanty family, escorted by Desroziers, came to see my copy. The count, who seemed to me a good connoisseur, declared himself satisfied with the work, and bought it. Mademoiselle Marianina, who was the heiress and favorite of her grand-uncle, was particularly delighted with it. Marianina was then about twenty-one years old, and I shall not make you her portrait because you know Madame de l'Estorade, to whom her likeness is extraordinary. Already an accomplished musician, this charming girl had a remarkable inclination for all the arts. Coming from time to time to my studio to watch the completion of the statue, a taste for sculpture seized her, as it did the Princesse Marie d'Orléans, and until the departure of the family, which took place a few months before I myself left Rome, Mademoiselle de Lanty took lessons from me in modelling.

I never dreamed of being another Saint-Preux or Abélard, but I must own that I found rare happiness in imparting my knowledge. Marianina was so gay and happy, her judgment of art so sound, her voice, when she sang, so stirred my heart, that had it not been for her vast fortune, which kept me at a distance,

I should have run great danger to my peace of mind. Admitted into the household on the footing of a certain familiarity, I could see that my beautiful pupil took pleasure in our intercourse, and when the family returned to Paris she expressed the utmost regret at leaving Rome; I even fancied, God forgive me, that I saw something like a tear in her eye when we parted.

On my return to Paris, some months later, my first visit was to the hôtel de Lanty. Marianina was too well bred and too kind at heart to be discourteous to any one, but I felt at once that a cold restrained manner was substituted for the gracious friendliness of the past. It seemed to me probable that her evident liking, I will not say for me personally, but for my conversation and acquirements, had been noticed by her parents, who had doubtless taught her a lesson; in fact, the stiff and forbidding manner of Monsieur and Madame de Lanty left me no other supposition.

Naturally, I did not call again; but a few months later, when I exhibited my Pandora in the salon of 1837, I one day saw the whole Lanty family approach it. The mother was on the arm of Comte Maxime de Trailles, a well-known lion. *Nil admirari* is the natural instinct of all men of the world; so, after a very cursory glance at my work, Monsieur de Trailles began to find shocking faults in it, and in so high and clear a voice that not a word was lost within a certain range. Marianina shrugged her shoulders as she listened to this profound discourse, and when it was ended she said, —

“How fortunate you came with us! Without your enlightened knowledge I might, with the rest of the

good public, have thought this statue admirable. It is a pity the sculptor is not here to learn his business from you."

"He *is* here, behind you," said a stout woman who had once been my landlady, and was standing near, laughing heartily. Involuntarily Marianina turned; when she saw me a vivid color came into her cheeks, and I slipped away into the crowd. A girl who took my part so warmly, and then showed such emotion on being detected in doing so, could not be absolutely indifferent to me; and as on my first visit I had only, after all, been coldly received, I decided, after my great success at the Exhibition, in consequence of which I was made a chevalier of the Legion of honor, to call again upon the Lantys; perhaps my new distinctions would procure me a better reception.

Monsieur de Lanty received me without rising, and with the following astounding apostrophe: —

"I think you very courageous, monsieur, to venture to present yourself here."

"I have never been received in a manner that seemed to require courage on my part."

"You have come, no doubt," continued Monsieur de Lanty, "in search of your property which you were careless enough to leave in our hands. I shall return you that article of gallantry."

So saying, he rose and took from a drawer in his secretary an elegant little portfolio, which he gave to me.

As I looked at it in a sort of stupefaction, he added:

"Yes; I know the letters are not there; I presume you will allow me to keep them."

“This portfolio, the letters you mention — all this is an enigma to me, monsieur.”

At this moment Madame de Lanty entered the room.

“What do you want?” said her husband, roughly.

“I knew monsieur was here, and as I feared some painful explanation, I came to do my duty as a woman, and interpose.”

“You need fear nothing, madame,” I said; “evidently what is taking place is the result of some misunderstanding.”

“Ah! this is too much!” cried Monsieur de Lanty, reopening the drawer from which he had taken the portfolio, and taking out a packet of letters tied with a rose-colored ribbon. “I think these will put an end to your *misunderstanding*.”

I looked at the letters; they were not postmarked, and simply bore my name, Monsieur Dorlange, in a woman’s handwriting, which was unknown to me.

“Monsieur,” I said, “you know more than I do; you have in your possession letters that seem to belong to me, but which I have never received.”

“Upon my word,” cried Monsieur de Lanty, “you are an admirable comedian; I never saw innocence better played.”

“But, monsieur,” I said, “who wrote those letters, and why are they addressed to me?”

“It is useless to deny them, monsieur,” said Madame de Lanty; “Marianina has confessed all.”

“Mademoiselle Marianina!” I exclaimed. “Then the matter is very simple; have the goodness to bring us together; let me hear from her lips the explanation of this singular affair.”



"The evasion is clever," replied Monsieur de Lanty ; " but my daughter is no longer here : she is in a convent, forever sheltered from your intrigues and the dangers of her own ridiculous passion. If that is what you came to know, all is said. Let us part, for my patience and moderation have a limit, if your insolence has none."

"Monsieur!" I began, angrily; but Madame de Lanty, who was standing behind her husband, made me a gesture as if she would fall upon her knees; and reflecting that perhaps Marianina's future depended on the attitude I now took, I controlled myself and left the room without further words.

The next morning, before I was out of bed, the Abbé Fontanon was announced to me. When he entered he proved to be a tall old man with a bilious skin and a sombre, stern expression, which he tried to soften by a specious manner and a show of gentle but icy obsequiousness.

"Monsieur," he said, "Madame la Comtesse de Lanty, whose confessor I have the honor to be, requests me to give you a few explanations, to which you have an incontestable right, as to the scene that took place last evening between her husband and yourself."

"I am ready to listen to you, monsieur," I replied.

"Monsieur de Lanty," continued the abbé, "is a bad sleeper; and one night last summer he was awakened by the sound of cautious steps. He opened his door, and called out to know who was there. He was not mistaken; some one was there, but did not answer, and disappeared before Monsieur de Lanty could obtain

a light. At first it was thought to be an attempt at robbery; but on further inquiry it appeared that a *gentleman* had taken a room in the neighborhood, and had frequently been seen in company with Mademoiselle Marianina, — in short, the matter concerned a love affair and not a robbery. Monsieur de Lanty has long watched his daughter, whose ardent inclinations have given him much anxiety; you yourself, monsieur, caused him some uneasiness in Rome — ”

“ Very needless, Monsieur l’abbé,” I said, interrupting him.

“ Yes, I know that your relations to Mademoiselle de Lanty have always been perfectly proper and becoming. But since their return to Paris another individual has occupied her mind, — a bold and enterprising man, capable of risking everything to compromise and thus win an heiress. Being taxed with having encouraged this man and allowed these nocturnal interviews, Mademoiselle de Lanty at first denied everything. Then, evidently fearing that her father, a violent man, would take some steps against her lover, she threw herself at his feet and admitted the visits, but denied that the visitor was the man her father named to her. At first she refused obstinately to substitute another name for the one she disavowed. After some days passed in this struggle, she finally confessed to her mother, under a pledge of secrecy, that her father was right in his suspicions, but she dreaded the results to the family if she acknowledged the truth to him. The man in question was a noted duellist, and her father and brother would surely bring him to account for his conduct. It was then, monsieur, that the idea occurred

to this imprudent girl to substitute another name for that of her real lover."

"Ah! I understand," I said; "the name of a nobody, an artist, a sculptor, or some insignificant individual of that kind."

"You do Mademoiselle de Lanty injustice by that remark," replied the abbé. "What decided her to make your name a refuge against the dangers she foresaw was the fact that Monsieur de Lanty had formerly had suspicions about you, and she thought that circumstance gave color to her statement."

"But, Monsieur l'abbé," I said, "how do you explain those letters, that portfolio, which her father produced yesterday?"

"That again was an invention of Marianina; and I may add that this duplicity assures me that had she remained in the world her future might have been terrible."

"Am I to suppose that this tale has been told you by Madame de Lanty?"

"Confided to me, monsieur, yes. You yourself saw Madame de Lanty's desire to stop your explanations yesterday, lest the truth might appear to her husband. I am requested by her to thank you for your connivance — passive, of course — in this pious falsehood. She felt that she could only show her profound gratitude by telling you the whole truth and relying upon your discretion."

"Where is Mademoiselle Marianina?"

"As Monsieur de Lanty told you, in a convent in Italy. To avoid scandal, it was thought best to send her to some safe retreat. Her own conduct will decide her future."

Now what do you think of that history? Does it not seem to you very improbable? Here are two explanations which have each come into my mind with the force of a conviction. First, Marianina's brother has just married into a grand-ducal family of Germany. Immense sacrifices must have been required of the de Lanty family to make such an alliance. Was Marianina's *dot*, and the fortune she inherited from that old grand-uncle, required to pay the costs of that princely union? Secondly, did Marianina really feel an attachment for me? And did she, in a girlish way, express it in those letters which she never sent? To punish her, had her parents sent her to a convent? And to disgust me, and throw me off the track, had the mother invented this history of another love in which she seemed to make me play so mortifying a part?

I may add that the intervention of the Abbé Fontanon authorizes such an interpretation. I have made inquiries about him, and I find he is one of those mischievous priests who worm themselves into the confidence of families for their own ends; he has already destroyed the harmony of one home, — that of Monsieur de Granville, attorney-general of the royal court of Paris under the Restoration.

As to the truth or falsehood of these suppositions I know nothing, and, in all probability, shall continue to know nothing. But, as you can easily understand, the thought of Marianina is a luminous point to which my eye is forever attracted. Shall I love her? Shall I hate her and despise her? That is the question perpetually in my mind. Uncertainty of that kind is far more certain to fix a woman in a man's soul than to dislodge her.

Well, to sum up in two brief sentences my reply to your warnings: As for the opinion of Monsieur Bixiou, I care as little for it as for last year's roses; and as for that other danger which you fear, I cannot tell you whether I love Marianina or not, but this I know, I do *not* love Madame de l'Estorade. That, I think, is giving you a plain and honest answer. And now, let us leave our master the Future to do what he likes.

XI. THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME OCTAVE  
DE CAMPS.

PARIS, May, 1839.

MONSIEUR DORLANGE came last evening to take leave of us. He starts to-day for Arcis-sur-Aube, where the ceremony of inaugurating *his* statue takes place. That is also the place selected by the Opposition journals for his candidacy. Monsieur de l'Estorade declares that the locality could not have been worse chosen, and that it leaves his election without a chance.

Monsieur Dorlange paid his visit early. I was alone. Monsieur de l'Estorade was dining with the Minister of the Interior, and the children were in bed. The conversation interrupted by Madame de la Bastie could now be renewed, and I was about to ask him to continue the history, of which he had only told me the last words, when our old Lucas brought me a letter. It was from my Armand, to let me know that he had been ill since morning, and was then in the infirmary.

"Order the carriage," I said to Lucas, in a state of agitation you can easily conceive.

"But, madame," replied Lucas, "monsieur has ordered the carriage to fetch him at half-past nine o'clock and Tony has already started."

"Then send for a cab."

"I don't know that I can find one," said our old servant, who is a man of difficulties; "it is beginning to rain."

Without noticing that remark and without thinking of Monsieur Dorlange, I went hastily to my room to put on my bonnet and shawl. That done, I returned to the salon, where my visitor still remained.

"You must excuse me, monsieur," I said to him, "for leaving you so abruptly. I must hasten to the Henri IV. College. I could not possibly pass a night in the dreadful anxiety my son's letter has caused me; he tells me he has been ill since morning in the infirmary."

"But," replied Monsieur Dorlange, "surely you are not going alone in a hired carriage to that lonely quarter?"

"Lucas will go with me."

At that moment Lucas returned; his prediction was realized; there was not a coach on the stand; it was raining in torrents. Time was passing; already it was almost too late to enter the school, where masters and pupils go to bed at nine o'clock.

"Put on thick shoes," I said to Lucas, "and come with me on foot."

Instantly I saw his face lengthen. He is no longer young and loves his ease; moreover, he complains every winter of rheumatism. He made various objections, — that it was very late; that we should "revolutionize" the school; I should take cold; Monsieur

Armand could not be very ill if he wrote himself ; in short, it was clear that my plan of campaign did not suit my old retainer.

Monsieur Dorlange very obligingly offered to go himself in my place and bring me word about Armand ; but that did not suit me at all ; I felt that I *must* see for myself. Having thanked him, I said to Lucas in a tone of authority : —

“Get ready at once, for one thing is true in your remarks : it is getting late.”

Seeing himself driven into a corner, Lucas raised the standard of revolt.

“It is not possible that madame should go out in such weather ; and I don’t want monsieur to scold me for giving in to such a singular idea.”

“Then you do not intend to obey me ? ”

“Madame knows very well that for anything reasonable I would do what she told me if I had to go through fire to obey her.”

“Heat is good for rheumatism, but rain is not,” I said ; then, turning to Monsieur Dorlange, I added : “As you were so kind as to offer to do this errand alone, may I ask you to give me your arm and come with me ? ”

“I am like Lucas,” he said, “I do not think this excursion absolutely necessary ; but as I am not afraid of being scolded by Monsieur de l’Estorade, I shall have the honor to accompany you.”

We started. The weather was frightful ; we had hardly gone fifty steps before we were soaked in spite of Lucas’s huge umbrella, with which Monsieur Dorlange sheltered me at his own expense. Luckily a

coach happened to pass; Monsieur Dorlange hailed the driver; it was empty. Of course I could not tell my companion that he was not to get into it; such distrust was extremely unbecoming and not for me to show. But you know, my dear friend, that showers of rain have helped lovers from the days of Dido down. However, Monsieur Dorlange said nothing; he saw my anxiety and he had the good taste not to attempt conversation, breaking the silence only from time to time with casual remarks. When we reached the school, after getting out of the carriage to give me his hand he saw for himself that he must not enter the house and he therefore got back into the carriage to await my return.

Well, I found Monsieur Armand had hoaxed me. His illness reduced itself to a headache, which departed soon after he had written to me. The doctor, for the sake of ordering something, had told him to take an infusion of linden-leaves, telling him that the next day he could go back to his studies. I had taken a club to kill a flea, and committed all sorts of enormities to get there at an hour when the entire establishment were going to bed, only to find my young gentleman perfectly well and playing chess with one of the nurses.

On leaving the school I found the rain had ceased and the moon was shining brightly. My heart was full; the reaction from my great anxiety had set in and I felt a need of breathing the fresh air. I therefore proposed to Monsieur Dorlange to dismiss the coach and return on foot.

Here was an opportunity for him to make me that



long-delayed explanation; but Monsieur Dorlange seemed so little inclined to take advantage of it that, using Master Armand's freak as a text, he read me a lecture on the danger of spoiling children: a subject which was not at all agreeable to me, as he must have perceived from the rather stiff manner with which I listened to him. Come, thought I, I must and will get to the bottom of this history; it is like the tale of Sancho's herdsman, which had the faculty of never getting told. So, cutting short my companion's theories of education, I said distinctly: —

“This is a very good time, I think, to continue the confidence you were about to make to me. Here we are sure of no interruption.”

“I am afraid I shall prove a poor story-teller,” replied Monsieur Dorlange. “I have spent all my fire this very day in telling that tale to Marie-Gaston.”

“That,” I answered laughing, “is against your own theory of secrecy, in which a third party is one too many.”

“Oh, Marie-Gaston and I count for one only. Besides, I had to reply to his odd ideas about you and me.”

“What about me?”

“Well, he imagined that in looking at the sun I should be dazzled by its rays.”

“Which means, speaking less metaphorically —?”

“That, in view of the singularities which accompanied my first knowledge of you and led me to the honor of your acquaintance, I might expose myself to the danger, madame, of not retaining my reason and self-possession.”

“And your history refutes this fear in the mind of Monsieur Marie-Gaston?”

“You shall judge.”

And then, without further preamble, he told me a long tale which I need not repeat here; the gist of it is, however, that Monsieur Dorlange is in love with a woman who posed in his imagination for Saint-Ursula; but as this woman appears to be forever lost to him it did not seem to me impossible that in the long run he might transfer his sentiments for her memory to me. When he had finished his tale he asked if I did not think it a victorious answer to the ridiculous fears of our friend.

“Modesty,” I replied, “obliges me to share your security; but they say that in the army shots frequently ricochet and kill their victims.”

“Then you think me capable of the impertinence Marie-Gaston is good enough to suspect in me?”

“I don’t know about its being an impertinence,” I said stiffly, “but if such a fancy came into your mind, I should think you very much to be pitied.”

His answer was vehement.

“Madame,” he said, “you will not have to pity me. In my opinion, first love is a vaccination which protects us from a second.”

The conversation stopped there. We had now reached my own door, and I invited Monsieur Dorlange to come in. He accepted my politeness, remarking that Monsieur de l’Estorade had probably returned and he could thus take leave of him.

My husband was at home. I don’t know whether Lucas, forestalling the rebuke I intended to give him,

had made out a story to excuse himself, or whether Monsieur de l'Estorade for the first time in his life felt, in view of my maternal escapade, a movement of jealousy. It is certain, however, that his manner of receiving me was curt; he called it an unheard-of thing to go out at such an hour, in such weather, to see a boy who proved, by announcing his own illness, that it was nothing serious. After letting him talk in this discourteous way for some little time, I thought it was time to put an end to the scene, so I said in a rather peremptory tone:—

“As I wanted to sleep at night, I went to the school in a pelting rain; I came back by moonlight; and I beg you to remark that monsieur, who was so good as to escort me, has come upstairs to bid you good-bye, because he leaves Paris to-morrow morning.”

I have habitually enough power over Monsieur de l'Estorade to make this call to order effective; but I saw that my husband was displeased, and that instead of having made Monsieur Dorlange an easy diversion, I had called down upon his head the ill-humor of my ogre, who instantly turned upon him.

After telling him that much had been said about his candidacy during dinner at the ministry, Monsieur de l'Estorade began to show him all the reasons why he might expect an overwhelming defeat; namely, that Arcis-sur-Aube was one of the boroughs where the administration felt itself most secure; that a man of extraordinary political ability had already been sent there to manipulate the election, and had made a first report giving triumphant news of his success. These were only generalities, to which Monsieur Dorlange

replied with modesty, but also with the air of a man who had resolved to take his chances against all risks to which his election might be exposed. Monsieur de l'Estorade then produced a final shaft which, under the circumstances, was calculated to have a marvellous effect, because it attacked both the candidate and his private life.

"Listen to me, my dear monsieur," said my husband, "when a man starts on an electoral career he must remember that he stakes everything; his public life and also his private life. Your adversaries will ransack your present and your past with a pitiless hand, and sorrow to him who has any dark spots to hide. Now I ought not to conceal from you that to-night, at the ministers', much was said about a little scandal which, while it may be venial in the life of an artist, takes proportions altogether more serious in that of the people's representative. You understand me, of course. I refer to that handsome Italian woman whom you have in your house. Take care; some puritanical elector whose own morality may be more or less problematical, is likely to call you to account for her presence."

The reply made by Monsieur Dorlange was very dignified.

"To those," he said, "who may arraign me on that detail of my private life I wish but one thing — that they may have nothing worse upon their consciences. If I had not already wearied madame on our way from the school with an interminable story, I would tell you the facts relating to my handsome Italian, and you would see, Monsieur le comte, that her presence in my house reflects in no way upon me."

"But," returned Monsieur de l'Estorade, softening his tone, "you take my observation rather too seriously. As I said just now, an artist may have a handsome model in his house — that may be natural enough — but she is not a usual piece of furniture in that of a legislator."

"No, what seems more to their liking," replied Monsieur Dorlange, with some heat, "is the good they can get for themselves out of a calumny accepted eagerly and without examination. However, far from dreading inquiry on the subject you mention, I desire it, and the ministry will do me a great service if it will employ the extremely able political personage you say they have put upon my path to bring that delicate question before the electors."

"Do you really start to-morrow?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, finding that he had started a subject which not only did not confound Monsieur Dorlange, but, on the contrary, gave him the opportunity to reply with a certain hauteur of tone and speech.

"Yes, and very early too; so that I must now take leave of you, having certain preparations still to make."

So saying, Monsieur Dorlange rose, and after making me a rather ceremonious bow and not bestowing his hand on Monsieur de l'Estorade, who, in turn, did not hold out his own, he left the room.

"What was the matter with Armand?" asked my husband, as if to avoid any other explanation.

"Never mind Armand," I said, "it is far more interesting to know what is the matter with you; for never did I see you so out of tune, so sharp and uncivil."

“What! because I told a ridiculous candidate that he would have to go into mourning for his reputation?”

“In the first place, that was not complimentary; and in any case the moment was ill-chosen with a man on whom my maternal anxiety had just imposed a disagreeable service.”

“I don’t like meddlers,” retorted Monsieur de l’Estorade, raising his voice more than I had ever known him do to me. “And after all, if he had not been here to give you his arm you would not have gone.”

“You are mistaken; I should have gone alone; for your servant, being master here, refused to accompany me.”

“But you must certainly admit that if any acquaintance had met you at half-past nine o’clock walking arm-in-arm with Monsieur Dorlange the thing would have seemed to them, to say the least, singular.”

Pretending to discover what I had known for the last hour, I exclaimed:—

“Is it possible that after sixteen years of married life you do me the honor to be jealous. Now I see why, in spite of your respect for proprieties, you spoke to Monsieur Dorlange in my presence of that Italian woman whom people think his mistress; that was a nice little perfidy by which you meant to ruin him in my estimation.”

Thus exposed to the light, my poor husband talked at random for a time, and finally had no resource but to ring for Lucas and lecture him severely. That ended the explanation.

What do you think of this conjugal proceeding, by

which my husband, wishing to do a man some harm in my estimation, gave him the opportunity to appear to the utmost advantage? For — there was no mistaking it — the sort of emotion with which Monsieur Dorlange repelled the charge was the cry of a conscience at peace with itself, and which knows itself able to confound a calumny.

## XII. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON.

PARIS, May, 1839.

ON my return this evening from the Estorades, on whom I had paid my parting call, I found your letter, my dear friend, in which you announce your coming arrival. I shall await you to-morrow during the day, but in the evening I must, without further delay, start for Arcis-sur-Aube, where, in the course of the next week my political matters will come to a head. What particular hold I may have on that town, which, as it appears, I have the ambition to represent, and on what co-operation and assistance I may rely, — in a word, *who* is making my electoral bed, — all that I know as little about as I did last year when I was told for the first time that I must enter political life.

A few days ago I received a second letter from my father, postmarked Paris this time, and not Stockholm. Judging by the style of the document, it would not surprise me if the “*eminent services*” rendered in a Northern court by the mysterious author of my days turned out to be those of a Prussian corporal. It would be impossible to issue orders in a more imperative tone, or to dwell more minutely on trifling particulars.

The note or memorandum was headed thus: *What my son is to do.*

On receipt of these instructions I am to send to its destination the Saint-Ursula; to superintend the packing and boxing of it myself, and to despatch it by the fastest carrier, to Mother Marie-des-Anges, superior of the convent of the Ursulines at Arcis-sur-Aube.

The order went on to say that I was to follow the statue in a few days, so as to arrive at the said Arcis-sur-Aube not later than the 3rd of May. Even the inn at which I was to put up was dictated. I would find myself expected at the Hôtel de la Poste; so that if I happen to prefer any of the others I must resign that fancy. I am also enjoined to publish in the newspapers on the day of my departure the fact that I present myself as candidate in the electoral arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube; avoiding, however, to make any profession of political faith, which would be both useless and premature. The document ended with an injunction which, while it humiliated me somewhat, gave me a certain faith in what was happening. The *morning of my departure* from Paris I am to go to the Mongenod Brothers, and draw for another sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, which *is to be* deposited in my name, "taking the utmost care," continued my instructions, "when transporting this money from Paris to Arcis-sur-Aube that it be not lost or stolen."

What do you think of that last clause, dear friend? That sum *is to be* deposited; then it is not already there; and suppose it is not there? — Besides, what am I to do with it in Arcis? Am I to stand my election on



English principles? if so, a profession of political faith would certainly be useless and premature. As to the advice not to lose or allow to be stolen the money in my possession, do you not think that that is making me rather juvenile? I feel an inclination to suck my thumb and cry for a rattle. However, I shall let myself go with the current that is bearing me along, and, notwithstanding the news of your coming arrival, after paying a visit to the Brothers Mongenod, I shall valiantly start, imagining the stupefaction of the good people of Arcis on seeing another candidate pop up in their midst like a Jack-in-the-box.

In Paris I have already fired my gun. The “*National*” has announced my candidacy in the warmest terms; and it seems that this evening, at the house of the Minister of the Interior, where Monsieur de l’Estorade was dining, I was discussed at some length. I ought to add that, according to Monsieur de l’Estorade, the general impression is that I shall certainly fail of election. The ministry might possibly fear a candidate from the Left centre; but as for the democratic party to which I am supposed to belong, they do not even allow that it exists. The Left centre candidate has, however, been disposed of by a ministerial envoy of the ablest and most active description, and at this moment, when I set off my small balloon, the election of the Conservative candidate is pretty well assured.

Among the elements of my inevitable defeat, Monsieur de l’Estorade condescended to mention a matter about which, dear friend, I am rather surprised that you have not already lectured me. It is one of those agreeable calumnies put in circulation in the salon

Montcornet by the honored and honorable Monsieur Bixiou. The scandal concerns a handsome Italian woman whom I brought back from Italy and with whom I am said to be living in a manner not canonical. Come, tell me, what hindered you from asking me to explain this important matter? Did you think the charge so shameful that you feared to offend me by alluding to it? Or have you such confidence in my morality that you felt no need of being strengthened therein? I did not have time to enter upon the necessary explanations to Monsieur de l'Estorade, neither have I the leisure to write them to you now. If I speak of the incident it is for the purpose of telling you of an observation I think I have made, into the truth of which I want you to examine after you get here. It is this : —

I have an idea that it would not be agreeable to Monsieur de l'Estorade to see me successful in my electoral campaign. He never gave much approbation to the plan; in fact he tried to dissuade me, but always from the point of view of my own interests. But to-day, when he finds that the plan has taken shape, and is actually discussed in the ministerial salon, my gentleman turns bitter, and he seems to feel a malignant pleasure in prophesying my defeat and in producing this charming little infamy under which he expects to bury our friendship.

Why so! I will tell you: while feeling some gratitude for the service I did him, the worthy man also felt from the height of his social position a superiority over me of which my entrance to the Chamber will now dispossess him; and it is not agreeable to him to

renounce that sense of superiority. After all, what is an artist, even though he may be a man of genius, compared to a peer of France, a personage who puts his hand to the tiller and steers the great political and social system; a man who has access to kings and ministers, and who would have the right if, by impossibility, such audacity should seize upon his mind, of depositing a black ball against the budget. Well, this privileged being does not like that I, and others like me, should assume the importance and authority of that insolent elective Chamber.

But that is not all. Hereditary statesmen have a foolish pretension: that of being initiated by long study into a certain science represented as arduous, which they call the science of public affairs and which they (like physicians with medical science) alone have the right to practise. They are not willing that an underling, a journalist for instance, or lower than that, an artist, a cutter of images, should presume to slip into their domain and speak out beside them. A poet, an artist, a writer may be endowed with eminent faculties, they will agree to that; the profession of such men presupposes it; but statesmen they cannot be. Chateaubriand himself, though better placed than the rest of us to make himself a niche in the Governmental Olympus, was turned out of doors one morning by a concise little note, signed Joseph de Villèle, dismissing him, as was proper, to René, Atala, and other futilities.

I know that time and that tall posthumous daughter of ours whom we call Posterity will some day do good justice and place the right thing in the right place. Towards the end of 2039, the world, if it deigns to last

till then, will know what Canalis, Joseph Bridau, Daniel d'Arthèz, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora were in 1839; whereas an infinitely small number of persons will know that during the same period Monsieur le Comte de l'Estorade was peer of France, and president of the Cour des comptes; Monsieur le Comte de Rastignac minister of Public Works; and his brother-in-law, Monsieur le Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a diplomat and Councillor of State employed on more or less extraordinary service.

But while awaiting this tardy classification and distant reform, I think it well to let our great governing class know from time to time that unless their names are Richelieu or Colbert they are liable to competition and are forced to accept it. So, with this aggravating intention I begin to take pleasure in my enterprise; and if I am elected, I shall, unless you assure me that I have mistaken de l'Estorade's meaning, find occasion to let him and others of his kind know that one can, if so disposed, climb over the walls of their little parks and strut as their equals.

But how is it, my dear friend, that I rattle on about myself and say no word about the sad emotions which must attend your return to France? How can you bear them? And instead of endeavoring to lay them aside, I fear you are willingly nursing them and taking a melancholy pleasure in their revival. Dear friend, I say to you of these great sorrows what I said just now of our governing class — we should consider them from the point of view of time and space, by the action of which they become after a while imperceptible.

Do me a favor! On arriving in Paris without hav-

ing a house prepared to receive you, it would be very friendly — you would seem like the man of old times — if you would take up your quarters with me, instead of going to Ville d'Avray, which, indeed, I think dangerous and even bad for you. Stay with me, and you can thus judge of my handsome housekeeper, and you will see how much she has been calumniated and misunderstood. You will also be near to the l'Estorades in whom I expect you to find consolations; and besides, this act would be a charming expiation for all the involuntary wrongs you have done me. At any rate, I have given my orders, and your room is ready for you.

P. S. You have not yet arrived, dear friend, and I must close this letter, which will be given to you by my housekeeper when you come to my house, for I am certain that your first visit will be to me.

I went this morning to the Mongenods'; the two hundred and fifty thousand francs were there, but with the accompaniment of a most extraordinary circumstance; the money was in the name of the Comte de Sallenaue, otherwise Dorlange, sculptor, 42 rue de l'Ouest. In spite of an appellation which has never been mine, the money was mine, and was paid to me without the slightest hesitation. I had enough presence of mind not to seem stupefied by my new name and title before the cashier; but I saw Monsieur Mongenod the elder in private, a man who enjoys the highest reputation at the Bank, and to him I expressed my astonishment, asking for whatever explanations he was able to give me. He could give none; the money came to him through a Dutch banker, his correspond-

ent at Rotterdam, and he knew nothing beyond that. *Ah ça!* what does it all mean? Am I to be a noble? Has the moment come for my father to acknowledge me? I start in a state of agitation and of anxiety which you can well understand. Until I hear from you, I shall address my letters to you here. If you decide not to stay in my house, let me know your address at once. Say nothing of what I have now told you to the l'Estorades; let it remain secret between us.

XIII. DORLANGE TO MARIE-GASTON.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, May 3, 1839.

DEAR FRIEND, — Last evening, before Maître Achille Pigault, notary of this place, the burial of Charles Dorlange took place, — that individual issuing to the world, like a butterfly from a grub, under the name and estate of Charles de Sallenaue, son of François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenaue. Here follows the tale of certain facts which preceded this brilliant transformation.

Leaving Paris on the evening of May 1st, I arrived at Arcis, according to my father's directions, on the following day. You can believe my surprise when I saw in the street where the diligence stopped the elusive Jacques Bricheteau, whom I had not seen since our singular meeting on the Île Saint-Louis. This time I beheld him, instead of behaving like the dog of Jean de Nivelles, come towards me with a smile upon his lips, holding out his hand and saying: —

“ At last, my dear monsieur, we are almost at the

end of all our mysteries, and soon, I hope, you will see that you have no cause to complain of me. Have you brought the money?"

"Yes," I replied, "neither lost nor stolen." And I drew from my pocket a wallet containing the two hundred and fifty thousand francs in bank notes.

"Very good!" said Jacques Bricheteau. "Now let us go to the Hôtel de la Poste; no doubt you know who awaits you there."

"No, indeed I do not," I replied.

"You must have remarked the name and title under which that money was paid to you?"

"Certainly; that strange circumstance struck me forcibly, and has, I must own, stirred my imagination."

"Well, we shall now completely lift the veil, one corner of which we were careful to raise at first, so that you might not come too abruptly to the great and fortunate event that is now before you."

"Am I to see my father?"

"Yes," replied Jacques Bricheteau; "your father is awaiting you; but I must warn you against a probable cloud on his manner of receiving you. The marquis has suffered much; the court life which he has always led has trained him to show no outward emotions; besides, he has a horror of everything bourgeois. You must not be surprised, therefore, at the cold and dignified reception he will probably give you; at heart, he is good and kind, and you will appreciate him better when you know him."

"Here," thought I, "are very comforting assurances, and as I myself am not very ardently disposed, I foresee that this interview will be at some degrees below zero."

Entering the room where the marquis awaited me, I saw a very tall, very thin, and very bald man seated at a table on which he was arranging some papers. At the noise we made in opening the door, he pushed his spectacles to his forehead, rested both hands on the arms of his chair, and awaited us.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sallenauve," said Jacques Bricheteau, announcing me with all the solemnity a chamberlain ushering in an ambassador might have shown.

The sight of the man who had given me life melted the ice within me; advancing towards him eagerly, I felt the tears coming into my eyes. He did not rise. On his face, which bore the remarkable distinction that used to be called the "grand air," there was not the slightest trace of emotion; he contented himself with holding out his hand and softly pressing mine; then he said:—

"Take a seat, monsieur; I have not the right as yet to call you my son."

When Jacques Bricheteau, and I were seated, this singular father continued:—

"You have, apparently, no objection to accept the political career we have prepared for you."

"On the contrary," I said, "the idea surprised me in the first instance, but I readily adopted it, and I have executed carefully, in order to insure its success, all the directions that have been conveyed to me."

"Right," said the marquis, taking from the table a gold snuff-box, which he turned in his fingers, then he added, after a moment's silence, "I owe you some explanations; our friend here, Jacques Bricheteau, will, if he pleases, give them to you."



*“ ‘ The sight of the man who had given me life melted  
the ice within me.’ ”*





ADRIEN MOREAU.



This was equivalent to the royal formula of the old régime : " My chamberlain will tell you the rest."

" To go back to the origin of everything," said Jacques Bricheteau, accepting the duty thus put upon him, " I must first tell you that you are not a legitimate Sallenaue. When Monsieur le marquis, here present, returned after the emigration, in the year 1808, he made the acquaintance of your mother, and in 1809 you were born as the fruit of their intercourse. Your birth, as you already know, cost your mother her life, and as misfortunes never come singly, Monsieur de Sallenaue was compromised in a conspiracy against the imperial power and compelled to fly the country. Brought up in Arcis with me, the marquis, wishing to give me a proof of his friendship, confided to me, on his departure to this new expatriation, the care of your childhood. I accepted that charge, I will not say with alacrity, but certainly with gratitude."

At these words the marquis held out his hand to Jacques Bricheteau, who was seated near him, and after a silent pressure, which did not seem to me remarkably warm, Jacques Bricheteau continued :—

" The mysterious precautions I was forced to take in carrying out my trust are explained by Monsieur le marquis's position towards the various governments which have succeeded each other in France since the period of your birth. Under the Empire, I feared that a government little indulgent to attacks upon itself might send you to share your father's exile ; it was then that the idea of giving you a sort of anonymous existence first occurred to me. Under the Restoration I feared for you another class of enemies ; the Sallenaue

family, which has no other representatives at the present day than Monsieur le marquis, was then powerful. In some way it got wind of your existence, and also of the fact that the marquis had taken the precaution not to recognize you, in order to retain the right to leave you his whole fortune, which, as a natural child, the law would in part have deprived you. The obscurity in which I kept you seemed to me the best security, against the schemes of greedy relations, and certain mysterious steps taken by them from time to time proved the wisdom of these precautions. Under the government of July, on the other hand, it was I myself who I feared might endanger you. I had seen the establishment of the new order of things with the deepest regret, and not believing in its duration, I took part in certain active hostilities against it, which brought me under the ban of the police."

Here the recollection that Jacques Bricheteau had been pointed out by the waiter of the Café des Arts as a member of the police made me smile, whereupon the speaker stopped short and said with a very serious air: —

"Do these explanations which I have the honor to give you seem improbable?"

I explained the meaning of my smile.

"That waiter," said Jacques Bricheteau, "was not altogether mistaken; for I have long been employed at the prefecture of police in the health department; but I have nothing to do with police espial; on the contrary, I have more than once come near being the victim of it."

Here a rather ridiculous noise struck our ears,

nothing less than a loud snore from my father, who thus gave us to know that he did not take a very keen interest in the explanations furnished in his name with a certain prolixity. I don't know whether Jacques Bricheteau's vanity being touched put him slightly out of temper, but he rose impatiently and shook the arm of the sleeper, crying out : —

“ Hey ! marquis, if you sleep like this at the Council of state, upon my soul, your country must be well governed ! ”

Monsieur de Sallenaube opened his eyes, shook himself, and then said, turning to me : —

“ Pardon me, Monsieur le comte, but for the last ten nights I have travelled, without stopping, to meet you here ; and though I spent last night in a bed, I am still much fatigued.”

So saying he rose, took a large pinch of snuff, and began to walk up and down the room, while Jacques Bricheteau continued : —

“ It is a little more than a year since I received a letter from your father explaining his long silence, the plans he had made for you, and the necessity he was under of keeping his incognito for a few years longer. It was at that very time that you made your attempt to penetrate a secret the existence of which had become apparent to you.”

“ You made haste to escape me,” I said laughing. “ It was then you went to Stockholm.”

“ No, I went to your father's residence ; I put the letter that he gave me for you into the post at Stockholm.”

“ I do not seize your — ”

"Nothing is easier to understand," interrupted the marquis. "I do not reside in Sweden, and we wished to throw you off the track."

"Will you continue the explanation yourself?" asked Jacques Bricheteau, who spoke, as you may have observed, my dear friend, with elegance and fluency.

"No, no, go on," said the marquis; "you are giving it admirably."

"Feeling certain that your equivocal position as to family would injure the political career your father desired you to enter, I made that remark to him in one of my letters. He agreed with me, and resolved to hasten the period of your legal recognition, which, indeed, the extinction of the family in its other branch rendered desirable. But the recognition of a natural child is a serious act which the law surrounds with many precautions. Deeds must be signed before a notary, and to do this by power of attorney would involve both in a publicity which he is anxious for the present to avoid, he being married, and, as it were, naturalized in the country of his adoption. Hence, he decided to come here himself, obtaining leave of absence for a few weeks, in order to sign in person all papers necessary to secure to you his name and property in this country. Now let me put to you a final question. Do you consent to take the name of de Sallenauve and be recognized as his son?"

"I am not a lawyer," I answered; "but it seems to me that, supposing I do not feel honored by this recognition, it does not wholly depend on me to decline it."



“Pardon me,” replied Jacques Bricheteau; “under the circumstances you could, if you chose, legally contest the paternity. I will also add, — and in doing so I am sure that I express the intentions of your father, — if you think that a man who has already spent half a million on furthering your career is not a desirable father, we leave you free to follow your own course, and shall not insist in any way.”

“Precisely, precisely,” said Monsieur de Sallenauve, uttering that affirmation with the curt intonation and shrill voice peculiar to the relics of the old aristocracy.

Politeness, to say the least, forced me to accept the paternity thus offered to me. To the few words I uttered to that effect, Jacques Bricheteau replied gayly: —

“We certainly do not intend to make you buy a father in a poke. Monsieur le marquis is desirous of laying before you all title-deeds and documents of every kind of which he is the present holder. Moreover, as he has been so long absent from this country, he intends to prove his identity by several of his contemporaries who are still living. For instance, among the honorable personages who have already recognized him I may mention the worthy superior of the Ursuline convent, Mother Marie-des-Anges, for whom, by the bye, you have done a masterpiece.”

“Faith, yes,” said the marquis, “a pretty thing, and if you turn out as well in politics —”

“Well, marquis,” interrupted Jacques Bricheteau, who seemed to me inclined to manage the affair, “are you ready to proceed with our young friend to the verification of the documents?”

“That is unnecessary,” I remarked, and I did not think that by this refusal I pledged my faith too much; for, after all, what signify papers in the hands of a man who might have forged them or stolen them? But my father would not consent; and for more than two hours they spread before me parchments, genealogical trees, contracts, patents, documents of all kinds, from which it appeared that the family of Sallenaue is, after that of Cinq-Cygne, the most ancient family in the department of the Aube. I ought to add that the exhibition of these archives was accompanied by an infinite number of spoken details which seemed to make the identity of the Marquis de Sallenaue indisputable. On all other subjects my father is laconic; his mental capacity does not seem to me remarkable, and he willingly allowed his *mouthpiece* to talk for him. But here, in the matter of his parchments, he was loquaciously full of anecdotes, recollections, heraldic knowledge; in short, he was exactly the old noble, ignorant and superficial in all things, but possessed of Benedictine erudition where the genealogy of his family was concerned.

The *session* would, I believe, be still going on, if Jacques Bricheteau had not intervened. As the marquis was preparing to read a voluminous memorandum refuting a chapter in Tallemant des Reaux’ “*Historiettes*” which did not redound to the credit of the great house of Sallenaue, the wise organist remarked that it was time we dined, if we intended to keep an appointment already made for seven o’clock at the office of Maitre Achille Pigoult the notary.

We dined, not at the table-d'hôte, but in private, and the dinner seemed very long on account of the silent preoccupation of the marquis, and the slowness with which, owing to his loss of teeth, he swallowed his food.

At seven o'clock we went to the notary's office ; but as it is now two o'clock in the morning, and I am heavy with sleep, I shall put off till to-morrow an account of what happened there.

May 4, 5 A. M.

I reckoned on peaceful slumbers, embellished by dreams. On the contrary, I did not sleep an hour, and I have waked up stung to the heart by an odious thought. But before I transmit that thought to you, I must tell you what happened at the notary's.

Maitre Achille Pigoult, a puny little man, horribly pitted with the small-pox, and afflicted with green spectacles, above which he darts glances of vivacious intelligence, asked us if we felt warm enough, the room having no fire. Politeness required us to say yes, although he had already given signs of incendiarism by striking a match, when, from a distant and dark corner of the room, a broken, feeble voice, the owner of which we had not as yet perceived, interposed to prevent the prodigality.

"No, Achille, no, don't make a fire," said an old man. "There are five in the room, and the lamp gives out a good heat; before long the room would be too hot to bear."

Hearing these words, the marquis exclaimed : —

"Ah! this is the good Monsieur Pigoult, formerly justice of the peace."

Thus recognized, the old man rose and went up to my father, into whose face he peered.

"*Parbleu !*" he cried, "I recognize you for a Champagnard of the *vieille roche*. Achille did not deceive me in declaring that I should see two of my former acquaintances. You," he said, addressing the organist, "you are little Bricheteau, the nephew of our good abbess, Mother Marie-des-Anges ; but as for that tall skeleton, looking like a duke and peer, I can't recall his name. However, I don't blame my memory ; after eighty-six years' service it may well be rusty."

"Come, grandfather," said Achille Pigoult, "brush up your memory ; and you, gentlemen, not a word, not a gesture. I want to be clear in my own mind. I have not the honor to know the client for whom I am asked to draw certain deeds, and I must, as a matter of legal regularity, have him identified."

While his son spoke, the old man was evidently straining his memory. My father, fortunately, has a nervous twitching of the face, which increased under the fixed gaze his *certifier* fastened upon him.

"Hey ! *parbleu !* I have it !" he cried. "Monsieur is the Marquis de Sallenaue, whom we used to call the 'Grimacer,' and who would now be the owner of the Château d'Arcis if, instead of wandering off, like the other fools, into emigration, he had stayed at home and married his pretty cousin."

"You are still *sans-culotte*, it seems," said the marquis, laughing.

"Messieurs," said the notary, gravely, "the proof I had arranged for myself is conclusive. This proof,

together with the title-deeds and documents Monsieur le marquis has shown to me, and which he deposits in my hands, together with the certificate of identity sent to me by Mother Marie-des-Anges, who cannot, under the rules of her Order, come to my office, are sufficient for the execution of the deeds which I have here — already prepared. The presence of two witnesses is required for one of them. Monsieur Bricheteau will, of course, be the witness on your side, and on the other my father, if agreeable to you; it is an honor that, as I think, belongs to him of right, for, as one may say, this matter has revived his memory.”

“Very good, messieurs, let us proceed,” said Jacques Bricheteau, heartily.

The notary sat down at his desk; the rest of us sat in a circle around him, and the reading of the first document began. Its purport was to establish, authentically, the recognition made by François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenaue, of me, his son. But in the course of the reading a difficulty came up. Notarial deeds must, under pain of being null and void, state the domicile of all contracting parties. Now, where was my father's domicile? This part had been left in blank by the notary, who now insisted on filling it before proceeding farther.

“As for this domicile,” said Achille Pigoult, “Monsieur le marquis appears to have none in France, as he does not reside in this country, and has owned no property here for a long time.”

“It is true,” said the marquis, seeming to put more meaning into his words than they naturally carried, “I am a mere vagabond in France.”

“ Ah ! ” said Jacques Bricheteau, “ vagabonds like you, who can present their sons with the necessary sum to buy estates, are not to be pitied. Still, the remark is a just one, not only as to France, but as to your residence in foreign countries. With your eternal mania for roving, it is really very difficult to assign you a domicile.”

“ Well,” said Achille Pigoult, “ it does not seem worth while to let so small a matter stop us. . Monsieur,” he continued, motioning to me, “ is now the owner of the Château d’Arcis, for an engagement to sell is as good as the sale itself. What more natural, therefore, than that the father’s domicile should be stated as being on his son’s estate, especially as this is really the family property now returned into the hands of the family, being purchased by the father for the son, particularly as that father is known and recognized by some of the oldest and most important inhabitants of the place? ”

“ Yes, that is true,” said old Pigoult, adopting his son’s opinion without hesitation.

“ In short,” said Jacques Bricheteau, “ you think the matter can go on.”

“ You see that my father, a man of great experience, did not hesitate to agree with me. We say, therefore,” continued the notary, taking up his pen, “ François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenaue, domiciled with Monsieur Charles de Sallenaue, his natural son, by him legally recognized, in the house known as the Château d’Arcis, arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube, department of the Aube.”

The rest of the deed was read and executed without comment.

Then followed a rather ridiculous scene.

"Now, Monsieur le comte," said Jacques Bricheteau, "embrace your father."

The marquis opened his arms rather indifferently, and I coldly fell into them, vexed with myself for not being deeply moved and for not hearing in my heart the voice of kindred. Was this barrenness of emotion the result of my sudden accession to wealth? A moment later a second deed made me possessor, on payment of one hundred and eighty thousand francs in ready money, of the Château d'Arcis, — a grand edifice which had caught my eye, on my first arrival in the town, by its lordly and feudal air.

"You may congratulate yourselves," said Achille Pigoult, "that you have got that estate for a song."

"Come, come!" said Jacques Bricheteau, "how long have you had it on your hands to sell? Your client would have let it go for one hundred and fifty thousand to others, but, as family property, you thought you could get more from us. We shall have to spend twenty thousand to make the house habitable; the land does n't return a rental of more than four thousand; so that our money, all expenses deducted, won't return us more than two and a half per cent."

"What are you complaining about?" returned Achille Pigoult. "You have employment to give and money to pay in the neighborhood, and what can be better for a candidate?"

"Ah! that electoral business," said Jacques Briche-

teau; "we will talk about that to-morrow when we bring you the purchase-money and your fees."

Thereupon we took leave, and returned to the Hôtel de la Poste, where I bade good-night to my father and came to my room to write to you.

Now I must tell you the terrible idea that drove sleep from my brain and put the pen once more in my hand,—although I am somewhat distracted from it by writing the foregoing two pages, and I do not see quite as much evidence for my notion as I did before I renewed this letter.

One thing is certain: during the last year many romantic incidents have happened to me. You may say that adventure seems to be the logical way of life for one in my position; that my birth, the chances that brought you (whose fate is so like mine) and me together, my relations with Marianina and my handsome housekeeper, and perhaps I might say with Madame de l'Estorade, all point to the possession of a fickle star, and that my present affair is only one of its caprices.

True; but what if, at the present moment under the influence of that star, I were implicated without my knowledge in some infernal plot of which I was made the passive instrument?

To put some order into my ideas, I begin by this half-million spent for an interest which you must agree is very nebulous,—that of fitting me to succeed my father in the ministry of some imaginary country, the name of which is carefully concealed from me.

Next: who is spending these fabulous sums on me? Is it a father tenderly attached to a child of love? No, it is a father who shows me the utmost coldness,



who goes to sleep when deeds which concern our mutual existence are being drawn, and for whom I, on my side, am conscious of no feeling; in fact, not to mince my words, I should think him a great booby of an *émigré* if it were not for the filial respect and duty I force myself to feel for him.

*But* — suppose this man were not my father, not even the Marquis de Sallenaue, as he asserts himself to be; suppose, like that unfortunate Lucien de Rubempré, whose history has made so much noise, I were caught in the toils of a serpent like that false abbé Don Carlos Herrera, and had made myself liable to the same awful awakening. You may say to me that you see no such likelihood; that Carlos Herrera had an object in fascinating Lucien and making him his double; but that I, an older man with solid principles and no love of luxury, who have lived a life of thought and toil, should fear such influence, is nonsense.

So be it. But why should the man who recognizes me as his son conceal the very country in which he lives, and the name by which he is known in that equally nameless Northern land which it is intimated that he governs? Why make such sacrifices for my benefit and show so little confidence? And see the mystery with which Jacques Bricheteau has surrounded my life! Do you think that that long-winded explanation of his explained it?

All this, my dear friend, rolling in my head and clashing with that half-million already paid to me, has given substance to a strange idea, at which you may perhaps laugh, but which, nevertheless, is not without precedent in criminal annals.

I told you just now that this thought invaded me as it were suddenly; it came like an instinct upon me. Assuredly, if I had had the faintest inkling of it last evening, I would have cut off my right hand sooner than sign that deed by which I have henceforth bound my fate to that of an unknown man whose past and future may be as gloomy as a canto of Dante's Hell, and who may drag me down with him into outer darkness.

In short, this idea — round which I am making you circle because I cannot bring myself to let you enter it — here it is, in all its crudity; I am afraid of being, without my knowledge, the agent, the tool of those associations of false coiners who are known in criminal records to concoct schemes as complicated and mysterious as the one I am now involved in, in order to put into circulation the money they coin. In all such cases you will find great coming and going of accomplices; cheques drawn from a distance on the bankers in great commercial centres like Paris, Stockholm, Rotterdam. Often one hears of poor dupes compromised. In short, do you not see in the mysterious ways of this Bricheteau something like an imitation, a reflection of the manœuvres to which these criminal workers are forced to have recourse, arranging them with a talent and a richness of imagination to which a novelist can scarcely attain?

One thing is certain: there is about me a thick unwholesome atmosphere, in which I feel that air is lacking and I cannot breathe. However, assure me, if you can, persuade me, I ask no better, that this is all an empty dream. But in any case I am determined to

have a full explanation with these two men to-morrow, and to obtain, although so late, more light than they have yet doled out to me. . . .

Another and yet stranger fact! As I wrote those last words, a noise of horses' hoofs came from the street. Distrustful now of everything, I opened my window, and in the dawning light I saw a travelling-carriage before the door of the inn, the postilion in the saddle, and Jacques Bricheteau talking to some one who was seated in the vehicle. Deciding quickly on my action, I ran rapidly downstairs; but before I reached the bottom I heard the roll of wheels and the cracking of the postilion's whip. At the foot of the staircase I came face to face with Jacques Bricheteau. Without seeming embarrassed, in fact with the most natural air in the world, he said to me, —

“What! my dear ward already up?”

“Of course; the least I could do was to say farewell to my excellent father.”

“He did not wish it,” replied that damned musician, with an imperturbability and phlegm that deserved a thrashing; “he feared the emotions of parting.”

“Is he so dreadfully hurried that he could not even give a day to his new and ardent paternity?”

“The truth is, he is an original; what he came to do, he has done; after that, to his mind, there is nothing to stay for.”

“Ah! I understand; he hastens to those high functions he performs at that Northern court!”

Jacques Bricheteau could no longer mistake the ironical tone in which these words were said.

“Until now,” he said, “you have shown more faith.”

“Yes; but I confess that faith begins to stagger under the weight of the mysteries with which it is loaded down without relief.”

“Seeing you at this decisive moment in your career giving way to doubts which our whole conduct pursued to you through many years ought to refute, I should be almost in despair,” replied Jacques Bricheteau, “if I had none but personal denials and asseverations to offer you. But, as you will remember, old Pigoult spoke of an aunt of mine, living in this neighborhood, where you will soon, I hope, find that her position is a most honorable one. I had arranged that you should see her in the course of the day; but now, if you will grant me the time to shave, I will take you at once, early as it is, to the convent of the Ursulines. There you shall question Mother Marie-des-Anges, who has the reputation of a saint throughout this whole department, and I think that at the close of your interview with her no doubt can remain upon your mind.”

While that devil of a man was speaking, his countenance had so perfect a look of integrity and benevolence, his speech, always calm, elegant, and self-possessed, so impressed the mind of his hearer, that I felt the tide of my anger going down and my sense of security rising.

In fact, his answer *is* irresistible. The convent of the Ursuline sisters — heavens and earth! that can't be the rendezvous of makers of false coin; and if the Mother Marie-des-Anges guarantees my father to me, as it appears she has already done to the notary, I should be foolish indeed to persist in my doubts.

“Very good,” I said to Jacques Bricheteau, “I will

go up and get my hat and walk up and down the bank of the river until you are ready."

"That's right; and be sure you watch the door of the hotel to see that I do not give you the slip as I did once upon a time on the Quai de Béthune."

Impossible to be more intelligent than that man; he seems to divine one's thoughts. I was ashamed of this last doubt of mine, and told him that, on the whole, I would go and finish a letter while awaiting him. It was this letter, dear friend, which I must now close if I wish it to go by to-day's post. I will write you soon of my visit to the convent.

XIV. MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME LA COMTESSE DE  
L'ESTORADE.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, May 6, 1839.

MADAME, — In any case I should gladly have profited by the request you were so good as to make that I should write to you during my stay in this town; but in granting me this favor you could not really know the full extent of your charity. Without you, madame, and the consolation of writing to you sometimes, what would become of me under the habitual weight of my sad thoughts in a town which has neither society, nor commerce, nor curiosities, nor environs; and where all intellectual activity spends itself on the making of pickled pork, soap-grease, stockings, and cotton night-caps. Dorlange, whom I shall not long call by that name (you shall presently know why) is so absorbed in steering his electoral frigate that I scarcely see him.

I told you, madame, that I resolved to come down here and join our mutual friend in consequence of a certain trouble of mind apparent in one of his letters, which informed me of a great revolution taking place in his life. I am able to-day to be more explicit. Dorlange at last knows his father. He is the natural son of the Marquis de Sallenaue, the last living scion of one of the best families in Champagne. Without explaining the reasons which have hitherto induced him to keep his son's birth secret, the marquis has now recognized him legally. He has also bought and presented to him an estate formerly belonging to the Sallenaue family. This estate is situated in Arcis itself, and its possession will assist the project of our friend's election. That project dates much farther back than we thought; and it did not take its rise in the fancy of Dorlange.

A year ago, the marquis began to prepare for it by sending his son a sum of money for the purchase of real estate in conformity with electoral laws; and it is also for the furtherance of this purpose that he has now made him doubly a landowner. The real object of all these sacrifices not seeming plain to Charles de Sallenaue, doubts have arisen in his mind, and it was to assist in dispelling them that my friendship for the poor fellow brought me here.

The marquis appears to be as odd and whimsical as he is opulent; for, instead of remaining in Arcis, where his presence and his name would contribute to the success of the election he desires, the very day after legal formalities attending the recognition of his son had been complied with, he departed furtively for

foreign countries, where he says he has important interests, without so much as taking leave of his son. This coldness has poisoned the happiness Charles would otherwise feel in these events; but one must take fathers as they are, for Dorlange and I are living proofs that all cannot have them as they want them.

Another eccentricity of the marquis is the choice he has made, as chief assistant in his son's election, of an old Ursuline nun, with whom he seems to have made a bargain, in which, strange to say, you have unconsciously played a part. Yes, madame, the Saint-Ursula for which, unknown to yourself, you were posing, will have, to all appearances, a considerable influence on the election of our friend. The case is this:

For many years Mother Marie-des-Anges, superior of the Ursuline convent at Arcis-sur-Aube, has desired to install in the chapel of her convent an image of its patron saint. But this abbess, who is a woman of taste and intelligence, would not listen to the idea of one of those stock figures which can be bought ready-made from the venders of church decorations. On the other hand, she thought it was robbing her poor to spend on this purpose the large sum necessary to procure a work of art. The nephew of this excellent woman is an organist in Paris to whom the Marquis de Sallenauve, then in emigration, had confided the care of his son. When it became a question of making Charles a deputy, the marquis naturally thought of Arcis, a place where his family had left so many memories. The organist also recollected his aunt's desire; he knew how influential she was in that region because of her saintliness, and having

in his nature a touch of that intrigue which likes to undertake things difficult and arduous, he went to see her, with the approval of the Marquis de Salles-nauve, and let her know that one of the most skilful sculptors in Paris was ready to make her the statue of Saint-Ursula if she, on her side, would promise to secure the artist's election as deputy from the arrondissement of Arcis.

The old nun did not think the undertaking beyond her powers. She now possesses the object of her pious longings; the statue arrived some days ago, and is already in the chapel of the convent, where she proposes to give it, before long, a solemn inauguration. It now remains to be seen whether the good nun will perform her part of the contract.

Well, madame, strange to say, after hearing and inquiring into the whole matter I shall not be surprised if this remarkable woman should carry the day. From the description our friend gives of her, Mother Marie-des-Anges is a small woman, short and thick-set, whose face is prepossessing and agreeable beneath its wrinkles and the mask of saffron-tinted pallor which time and the austerities of a cloister have placed upon it. Carrying very lightly the weight of her corpulence and also that of her seventy-six years, she is lively, alert, and frisky to a degree that shames the youngest of us. For fifty years she has governed in a masterly manner her community, which has always been the most regular, the best organized, and also the richest society in the diocese of Troyes. Admirably fitted for the training of youth, she has long conducted a school for girls, which is famous through-



out the department of the Aube and adjacent regions. Having thus superintended the education of nearly all the daughters of the best houses in the province, it is easy to imagine the influence she has acquired among the aristocracy, — an influence she probably intends to use in the electoral struggle she has promised to take part in.

On the other hand, it appears that this really extraordinary woman is the sovereign disposer of the votes of the democratic party in the arrondissement of Arcis. Until now, the existence of that party in Arcis has been considered problematical; but it is actually, by its nature, active and stirring, and our candidate proposes to present himself under its banner. Evidently, therefore, the support the good mother has promised will be useful and important.

I am sure you will admire with me the — as one might say — bicephalous ability of this old nun, who has managed to keep well with the nobility and the secular clergy on the one hand, and on the other to lead with her wand the radical party, their sworn enemy. Admirable for her charity and her lucid intellect, respected throughout the region as a saint, exposed during the Revolution to a dreadful persecution, which she bore with rare courage, one can easily understand her close relations with the upper and conservative classes; but why she should be equally welcome to democrats and to the subverters of order would seem, at first, to pass all belief.

The power which she undoubtedly wields over the revolutionary party took its rise, madame, in a struggle which they formerly had together. In 1793

that amiable party were bent upon cutting her throat. Driven from her convent, and convicted of harboring a "refractory" priest, she was incarcerated, arraigned before the revolutionary tribunal, and condemned to death. The matter was reported to Danton, a native of Arcis, and then a member of the National Convention. Danton had known Mother Marie-des-Anges; he thought her the most virtuous and enlightened woman he had ever met. Hearing of her condemnation, he was furiously angry, and wrote, as they said in those days, a high-horse letter to the Revolutionary tribunal, and, with an authority no human being in Arcis would have dared to contest, he ordered a reprieve.

The same day he mounted the tribune, and after speaking in general terms of the "bloody boobies" who by their foolish fury compromised the future of the Revolution, he told who and what Mother Marie-des-Anges really was; he dwelt on her marvellous aptitude for the training of youth, and he presented a scheme in which she was placed at the head of a "grand national gynæcium," the organization of which was to be made the subject of another decree. Robespierre, who would have thought the intellect of an Ursuline nun only a more imperative reason for bringing her under the revolutionary axe, was absent that day from the session, and the motion was voted with enthusiasm. The head of Mother Marie-des-Anges being indispensably necessary to the carrying out of this decree of the sovereign people, she kept it on her shoulders, and the headsman put aside his machine.

Though the other decree, organizing the Grand National Gynæcium, was lost sight of in the many other duties that devolved upon the Convention, the excellent nun carried it out after her fashion. Instead of something grand and Greek and national, she started in Arcis a secular girl's-school, and as soon as a little quiet was restored to the minds of the community, pupils flocked in from all quarters. Under the Empire Mother Marie-des-Anges was able to reconstitute her Ursuline sisterhood, and the first act of her restored authority was a recognition of gratitude. She decreed that every year on the 5th of April, the anniversary of Danton's death, a service should be held in the chapel of the convent for the repose of his soul. To those who objected to this edict she answered: "Do you know many for whom it is more necessary to implore God's mercy?"

Under the Restoration, the celebration of this service became a sort of scandal; but Mother Marie-des-Anges would never hear of suppressing it, and the great veneration which has always surrounded her obliged these cavillers to hold their tongues. This courageous obstinacy had its reward, under the government of July. To-day Mother Marie-des-Anges is high in court favor, and there is nothing she cannot obtain in the most august regions of power; but it is only just to add that she asks nothing, — not even for her charities, for she provides the means to do them nobly by the wise manner in which she administers the property of her convent.

Her gratitude, thus openly shown to the memory of the great revolutionist, has been of course to the revolu-

tionary party a potent recommendation, but not the only one.

In Arcis the leader of the advanced Left is a rich miller named Laurent Goussard, who possesses two or three mills on the river Aube. This man, formerly a member of the revolutionary municipality of Arcis and the intimate friend of Danton, was the one who wrote to the latter telling him that the axe was suspended over the throat of the ex-superior of the Ursulines. This, however, did not prevent the worthy *sans-culotte* from buying up the greater part of the convent property when it was sold under the name of national domain.

At the period when Mother Marie-des-Anges was authorized to reconstitute her community, Laurent Goussard, who had not made much by his purchase, went to see the good abbess, and proposed to her to buy back the former property of her convent. Very shrewd in business, Laurent Goussard, whose niece Mother Marie-des-Anges had educated gratuitously, seemed to pique himself on the great liberality of this offer, the terms of which were that the sisterhood should reimburse him the amount of his purchase-money. The dear man was not however making a bad bargain, for the difference in the value of assignats with which he had paid and the good sound money he would receive made a pretty profit. But Mother Marie-des-Anges, remembering that without his warning Danton could not have saved her, did better still for her first helper. At the time when Laurent Goussard made his offer the community of the Ursulines was, financially speaking, in an excellent position. Having since its

restoration received many liberal gifts, it was also enriched by the savings of its superior, made from the proceeds of her secular school, which she generously made over to the common fund. Laurent Goussard must therefore have been thunderstruck when he read the following letter : —

“Your proposal does not suit me. My conscience will not allow me to buy property below its proper value. Before the Revolution the property of our abbey was estimated at — [so much]. That is the price I choose to give, and not that to which it has fallen since the great depreciation of all property called national. In a word, my friend, I wish to pay you more than you ask ; let me know if that suits you.”

Laurent Goussard thought at first that either she had misunderstood him or he her. But when it became clear to him that owing to these pretended scruples of Mother Marie-des-Anges, he was the gainer of fifty thousand francs, he would not do violence to so tender a conscience, and he pocketed this profit (which came to him literally from heaven), but he went about relating everywhere the marvellous proceeding, which, as you can well imagine, put Mother Marie-des-Anges on a pinnacle of respect (especially from the holders of other national property) which leaves her nothing to fear from any future revolution. Personally Laurent Goussard has become her slave, her henchman. He does no business, he takes no step, he never moves a sack of flour without going to her for advice ; and, as she said in joke the other day, if she took a fancy to make a John the Baptist of the sub-prefect, Laurent Goussard would bring her his head on a charger. That

is proof enough that he will also bring his vote and that of his friends to any candidate she may favor.

Among the clergy Mother Marie-des-Anges has, naturally, many affiliations, — as much on account of her high reputation for goodness as for the habit of her order, but she particularly counts among the number of her most zealous servitors Monseigneur Troubert, bishop of the diocese, who, though formerly a familiar of the Congregation [see “The Vicar of Tours”], has nevertheless managed to secure from the dynasty of July an archbishopric which will lead to a cardinalship.

When you have the clergy you have, or you are very near having, the legitimist party with you, — a party which, while passionately desirous of free education and filled with hatred for the July throne, is not averse, when occasion offers, to yielding to a monstrous union with the radical party. Now the head of the legitimists in Arcis and its neighborhood is, of course, the family of Cinq-Cygne. Never does the old marquise, whose haughty nature and powerful will you, madame, know well [see “An Historical Mystery”], — never does she drive into Arcis from her château of Cinq-Cygne, without paying a visit to Mother Marie-des-Anges, who in former days educated her daughter Berthe, now the Duchesse Georges de Maufrigneuse.

But now we come to the most opposing and resisting side, — that of the conservatives, which must not be confounded with the party of the administration. Here we find as its leader the Comte de Gondreville, your husband’s colleague in the Chamber of peers. Closely allied to the count is a very influential man, his old friend Grévin, formerly mayor and notary of

Arcis, who, in turn, draws after him another elector of considerable influence, Maître Achille Pigoult, to whom, on retiring from active life, he sold his practice as notary.

But Mother Marie-des-Anges has a powerful means of access to the Comte de Gondreville through his daughter, the Maréchale de Carigliano. That great lady, who, as you know, has taken to devotion, goes into retreat every year at the Ursuline convent. More than that, the good Mother, without giving any explanations, intimates that she has a lever of some kind on the Comte de Gondreville known to herself only; in fact, the life of that old regicide—turned senator, then count of the Empire, then peer of France under two dynasties—has wormed itself through too many tortuous underground ways not to allow us to suppose the existence of secrets he might not care to have unmasked.

Now Gondreville is Grévin, — his confidant, and, as they say, his tool, his catspaw for the last fifty years. But even supposing that by an utter impossibility their close union should, under present circumstances, be sundered, we are certainly sure of Achille Pigoult, Grévin's successor, on whom, when the purchase of the château d'Arcis was made in his office by the Marquis de Sallenaue, a fee was bestowed of such an unusual amount that to accept it was virtually to pledge himself.

As for the ruck of the electors, our friend cannot fail to make recruits there, by the work he is about to give in repairing the château, which, fortunately for him, is falling into ruins in several places. We must

also count on the manifesto which Charles de Sallenauve has just issued, in which he openly declares that he will accept neither favors nor employment from the government. So that, really, taking into consideration his own oratorical talent, the support of the Opposition journals both here and in Paris, the insults and calumnies which the ministerial journals are already beginning to fire upon him, I feel great hopes of his success.

Forgive me for presenting to you in glowing colors the parliamentary future of a man of whom, you said to me the other day, you felt you could not safely make a friend, because of the lofty and rather impertinent assumption of his personality. To tell the truth, madame, whatever political success may be in store for Charles de Sallenauve, I fear that he may one day regret the calmer fame of which he was already assured in the world of art. But neither he nor I was born under an easy and accommodating star. Birth has been a costly thing to us; it is therefore doubly cruel not to like us. You have been kind to me because you fancy that a lingering fragrance of our dear Louise still clings to me; give something, I beseech you, of the same kindness to him whom I have not hesitated in this letter to call our friend.

XV. MARIE-GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, May 13, 1839.

MADAME, — I see that the electoral fever is upon you, as you are good enough to send me from Monsieur de l'Estorade so many *discouragements* which certainly deserve consideration.



We knew already of the mission given to Comte Maxime de Trailles, — a mission he endeavored at first to conceal under some irrigating project. We even know what you, madame, seem not to know, — that this able ministerial agent has found means to combine with the cares of electoral politics those of his own private policy. Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, if we are rightly informed, was on the point of succumbing to the chronic malady with which he has been so long afflicted; I mean *debt*. Not debts, for we say “the debt of Monsieur de Trailles,” as we say “the debt of England.” In this extremity the patient, resolved on heroic remedies, adopted that of marriage, which might perhaps be called marriage *in extremis*.

To cut a long story short, Monsieur de Trailles was sent to Arcis to put an end to the candidacy of an upstart of the Left centre, a certain Simon Giguet; and having brought forward the mayor of the town as the ministerial candidate, he finds the said mayor, named Beauvisage, possessed of an only daughter, rather pretty, and able to bring her husband five hundred thousand francs amassed in the honorable manufacture of cotton night-caps. Now you see, I am sure, the mechanism of the affair.

As for our own claims, we certainly do not make cotton night-caps, but we make statues, — statues for which we are decorated with the Legion of honor; religious statues, inaugurated with great pomp by Monseigneur the bishop of the diocese and all the constituted authorities; statues, or rather *a* statue, which the whole population of the town has flocked to the Ursuline convent to behold, where Mesdames the

nuns, not a little puffed up with this magnificent addition to their bijou of a chapel, have kept their house and their oratory open to all comers for this whole day. Is not that likely to popularize our candidacy?

This evening, to crown the ceremony of inaugurating our Saint-Ursula, we give in our château of Arcis a banquet to fifty guests, among whom we have had the malice to invite (with the chief inhabitants of the place) all the ministerial functionaries and, above all, the ministerial candidate. But, in view of our own declared candidacy, we feel pretty well assured that the latter will not respond to the invitation. So much the better! more room for others; and the missing guests, whose names will be made known on the morrow, will be convicted of a *servilism* which will, we think, injure their influence with the population.

Yesterday we paid a visit at the château de Cinq-Cygne, where d'Arthèz presented us, in the first place, to the Princesse de Cadignan, who is wonderfully well preserved. Both she and the old Marquise de Cinq-Cygne received Dorlange—I should say, Sallenaue—in the warmest manner. It was from them that we learned the history of Monsieur Maxime de Trailles' mission and its present results. It seems that on his arrival the ministerial agent received some attentions at Cinq-Cygne,—mere floating sticks, to discover the set of his current. He evidently flattered himself that he should find support at Cinq-Cygne for his electioneering intrigue; which is so far from being the case that Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse, to whom, as a Jockey Club comrade, he told all his projects, gave us the information about them which I have now given

to you, and which, if you will be so kind, I should like you to make over to Monsieur de l'Estorade.

May 12th.

The dinner has taken place, madame; it was magnificently served, and Arcis will talk about it for some time to come. Sallenaue has in that organist (who, by the bye, showed his talent on the organ admirably during the ceremony of inauguration) a sort of steward and factotum who leaves all the Vatel's of the world far behind him; he would never have fallen on his sword for lack of a fish! Colored lamps, garlands, draperies, decorated the dining-room; even fireworks were provided; nothing was wanting to the fête, which lasted to a late hour in the gardens of the château, where the populace danced and drank to its heart's content.

Nearly all the invited guests came except those we desired to compromise. The invitations having been sent at short notice, it was amusing to read the notes and letters of excuses, which Sallenaue ordered to be brought to him in the salon as they arrived. As he opened each he took care to say: "This is from Monsieur the sub-prefect; this from the *procureur-du-roi*; this from Monsieur Vinet the substitute, expressing regret that they cannot accept the invitation." All these concerted refusals were received with smiles and whispers by the company; but when a letter arrived from Beauvisage, and Sallenaue read aloud the "impossibility in which he found himself to *correspond* to his politeness," the hilarity grew noisy and general,

and was only stopped by the entrance of Monsieur Martener, examining-judge, who performed an act of courage in coming to the dinner which his colleagues declined. We must remark, however, that an examining-judge has two sides to him. On that of judge he is irremovable; he can only be deprived of the slight increase of salary he receives as an examiner and of the privilege of signing warrants and questioning thieves, — splendid rights of which the chancellor can mulct him by a stroke of his pen. But allowing that Monsieur Martener was only semi-brave, he was greeted on this occasion as a full moon.

The Duc de Maufrigneuse, d'Arthèz, and Monseigneur the bishop, who was staying at Cinq-Cygne for a few days, were all present, and this made more noticeable the absence of one man, namely, Grévin, whose excuse, sent earlier in the day, was not read to the company. The non-appearance of the Comte de Gondreville was explained by the recent death of his grandson, Charles Keller; and in sending the invitation Sallenaue had been careful to let him know he should understand a refusal. But that Grévin, the count's right arm, should absent himself, seemed to show that he and his patron were convinced of the probable election of Beauvisage, and would have no intercourse with the new candidate.

The dinner being given in honor of Saint-Ursula's installation, which could not be celebrated by a banquet in the convent, Sallenaue had a fine opportunity for the following toast: —

“To the Mother of the poor; the noble and saintly spirit which, for fifty years, has shone on Champagne,

and to which we owe the vast number of distinguished and accomplished women who adorn this beautiful region of our country."

If you knew, as I do, madame, what a forlorn, beggarly region Champagne is, you would say, or something like it, that Sallenaue is a rascally fellow, and that the passion to enter the legislature makes a man capable of shocking deceit. Was it worth while, in fact, for a man who usually respects himself to boldly tell a lie of criminal dimensions, when a moment later a little unforeseen circumstance occurred which did more than all the speeches ever uttered to commend him to the sympathy of the electors?

You told me, madame, that your son Armand found a strong likeness to the portraits of Danton in our friend Sallenaue; and it seems that the boy's remark was true, for several persons present who had known the great revolutionist during his lifetime made the same observation. Laurent Goussard, who, as I told you in a former letter, was Danton's friend, was also, in a way, his brother-in-law; for Danton, who was something of a gallant, had been on close terms for several years with the miller's sister. Well, the likeness must be striking, for after dinner, while we were taking our coffee, the worthy Goussard, whose head was a little warmed by the fumes of wine, came up to Sallenaue and asked him whether he was certain he had made no mistake about his father, and could honestly declare that Danton had nothing to do with his making.

Sallenaue took the matter gayly, and answered arithmetically, —

“Danton died April 5, 1794. To be his son, I must have been born no later than January, 1795, which would make me forty-four years old to-day. But the register of my birth, and I somewhat hope my face, make me out exactly thirty.”

“Yes, you are right,” said Laurent Goussard; “figures demolish my idea; but no matter, — we’ll vote for you all the same.”

I think the man is right; this chance resemblance is likely to have great weight in the election. You must remember, madame, that, in spite of the fatal facts which cling about his memory, Danton is not an object of horror and execration in Arcis, where he was born and brought up. In the first place time has purged him; his grand character and powerful intellect remain, and the people are proud of their compatriot. In Arcis they talk of Danton as in Marseilles they talk of Canebière. Fortunate, therefore, is our candidate’s likeness to this demigod, the worship of whom is not confined to the town, but extends to the surrounding country.

These voters *extra muros* are sometimes curiously simple-minded, and obvious contradictions trouble them not at all. Some agents sent into the adjacent districts have used this fancied resemblance; and as in a rural propaganda the object is less to strike fair than to strike hard, Laurent Goussard’s version, apocryphal as it is, is hawked about the country villages with a coolness that admits of no contradiction.

While this pretended revolutionary origin is advancing our friend’s prospects in one direction, in another the tale put forth to the worthy voters whom it is desirable to entice is different, but truer and not less striking

to the minds of the country-people. This is the gentleman, they are told, who has bought the château of Arcis; and as the château of Arcis stands high above the town and is known to all the country round, it is to these simple folk a species of symbol. They are always ready to return to memories of the past, which is much less dead and buried than people suppose; "Ah! he's the *seigneur* of the château," they say.

This, madame, is how the electoral kitchen is carried on and the way in which a deputy is cooked.

XVI. MARIE-GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, May 15, 1839.

MADAME, — You do me the honor to say that my letters amuse you, and you tell me not to fear that I send too many.

We are no longer at the Hôtel de la Poste, having left it for the château; but thanks to the rivalry existing between the two inns, the Poste and the Mulet, in the latter of which Monsieur de Trailles has established his headquarters, we are kept informed of what is going on in the town and among our enemies. Since our departure, as our late landlord informs us, a Parisian journalist has arrived at his hotel. This individual, whose name I do not know, at once announced himself as Jack-the-giant-killer, sent down to reinforce with his Parisian vim and vigor the polemic which the local press, subsidized by the "bureau of public spirit," has directed against us.

In that there is nothing very grave or very gay; since the world was a world, governments have always found pens for sale, and never have they failed to buy

them; but the comedy of this affair begins with the co-arrival and the co-presence in the hotel of a young lady of very problematical virtue. The name of this young lady as it appears on her passport is Mademoiselle Chocardelle; but the journalist in speaking of her calls her Antonia, or, when he wants to treat her with more respect, Mademoiselle Antonia.

Now, what can bring Mademoiselle Chocardelle to Arcis? A pleasure trip, you will say, offered to her by the journalist, who combines with that object our daily defamation and his consequent earnings from the secret-service fund of the government. Not at all; Mademoiselle Chocardelle has come to Arcis on business of her own, — namely, to enforce a claim.

It seems that Charles Keller before his departure for Africa, where he met a glorious death, drew a note of hand, payable to Mademoiselle Antonia or order, for ten thousand francs, “value received in furniture,” a charming ambiguity, the furniture having been received by, and not from, Mademoiselle Chocardelle, who estimated at ten thousand francs the sacrifice she made in accepting it.

A few days after Charles Keller's death, the note being almost due, Mademoiselle Antonia went to the counting-room of the Keller Brothers to inquire about its payment. The cashier, who is crabbed, like all cashiers, replied that he did not see how Mademoiselle Antonia had the face to present such a note; at any rate, the heads of the house were at Gondreville, where the whole family had met after receiving the fatal news, and he should pay no such note without referring the matter to them.



“Very good, then I’ll refer it to them myself,” replied Mademoiselle Antonia. Thereupon she was meditating a departure alone to Arcis, when the government felt the need of insulting us with more wit and point than provincial journalism can muster, and so confided that employment to a middle-aged journalist to whom Mademoiselle Antonia had, during the absence of Charles Keller, shown some kindness. “I am going to Arcis,” seems to have been said at the same instant by writer and lady. The most commonplace lives encounter similar coincidences.

Now, madame, admire the manner in which things link together. Setting forth on a purely selfish financial enterprise, behold Mademoiselle Chocardelle suddenly brought to the point of wielding an immense electoral influence! And observe also that her influence is of a nature to compensate for all the witty pin-pricks of her gallant companion.

Mademoiselle’s affair, it appears, hung fire. Twice she went to Gondreville, and was not admitted. The journalist was busy, — partly with his articles, and partly with certain commissions given to him by Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, under whose orders he was told to place himself. Mademoiselle Antonia was therefore much alone; and in the ennui of such solitude, she was led to create for herself a really desperate amusement.

A few steps from the Hôtel de la Poste is a bridge across the Aube; a path leads down beside it, by a steep incline, to the water’s edge, which, being hidden from the roadway above and little frequented, offers peace and solitude to whoever may like to dream there

to the sound of the rippling current. Mademoiselle Antonia at first took a book with her; but books not being, as she says, in her line, she looked about for other ways of killing her time, and bethought herself of fishing, for which amusement the landlord of the inn supplied her with a rod. Much pleased with her first successes, the pretty exile devoted herself to an occupation which must be attractive, — witness the fanatics that it makes; and the few persons who crossed the bridge could admire at all hours a charming naiad in a flounced gown and a broad-brimmed straw hat, engaged in fishing with the conscientious gravity of a *gamin de Paris*.

Up to this time Mademoiselle Antonia and her fishing have had nothing to do with our election; but if you will recall, madame, in the history of Don Quixote (which I have heard you admire for its common-sense and jovial reasoning) the rather disagreeable adventure of Rosinante and the muleteers, you will have a foretaste of the good luck which the development of Mademoiselle Antonia's new passion brought to us.

Our rival, Beauvisage, is not only a successful stocking-maker and an exemplary mayor, but he is also a model husband, having never tripped in loyalty to his wife, whom he respects and admires. Every evening, by her orders, he goes to bed before ten o'clock, while Madame Beauvisage and her daughter go into what Arcis is pleased to call society. But there is no more treacherous water, they say, than still water, just as there was nothing less proper and less well-behaved than the calm and peaceable Rosinante on the occasion referred to.

At any rate, while making the tour of his town according to his laudable official habit, Beauvisage from the top of the bridge chanced to catch sight of the fair Parisian who with outstretched arms and gracefully bent body was pursuing her favorite pastime. A slight movement, the charming impatience with which the pretty fisher twitched her line from the water when the fish had not bitten, was perhaps the electric shock which struck upon the heart of the magistrate, hitherto irreproachable. No one can say, perhaps, how the thing really came about. But I ought to remark that during the interregnum that occurred between the making of socks and night-caps and the assumption of municipal duties, Beauvisage himself had practised the art of fishing with a line with distinguished success. Probably it occurred to him that the poor young lady, having more ardor than science, was not going the right way to work, and the thought of improving her method may have been the real cause of his apparent degeneracy. However that may be, it is certain that, crossing the bridge in company with her mother, Mademoiselle Beauvisage suddenly cried out, like a true *enfant terrible*, —

“ Goodness ! there’s papa talking with that Parisian woman ! ”

To assure herself at a glance of the monstrous fact, to rush down the bank and reach her husband (whom she found with laughing lips and the happy air of a browsing sheep), to blast him with a stern “ What are you doing here ? ” to order his retreat to Arcis with the air of a queen, while Mademoiselle Chocardelle, first astonished and then enlightened as to what it all

meant, went off into fits of laughter, took scarcely the time I have taken to tell it. Such, madame, was the proceeding by which Madame Beauvisage, *née* Grévin, rescued her husband ; and though that proceeding may be called justifiable, it was certainly injudicious, for before night the whole town had heard of the catastrophe, and Beauvisage, arraigned and convicted by common consent of deplorable immorality, saw fresh desertions taking place in the already winnowed phalanx of his partisans.

However, the Gondreville and Grévin side still held firm, and — would you believe it, madame? — it was again Mademoiselle Antonia to whom we owe the overthrow of their last rampart.

Here is the tale of that phenomenon : Mother Marie-des-Anges wanted an interview with the Comte de Gondreville ; but how to get it she did not know, because to ask for it was not, as she thought, proper. Having, it appears, unpleasant things to say to him, she did not wish to bring the old man to the convent expressly to hear them ; such a proceeding seemed to her uncharitable. Besides, things comminatory delivered point-blank will often provoke their recipient instead of alarming him ; whereas the same things slipped in sweetly never fail of their effect. Still, time was passing ; the election, as you know, takes place to-morrow, Sunday, and the preparatory meeting of all the candidates and the electors, to-night. The poor dear saintly woman did not know what course to take, when a little matter occurred, most flattering to her vanity, which solved her doubts. A pretty sinner, she was told, who had come to Arcis to “ do ” Monsieur

Keller the financier, then at Gondreville, out of some money, had heard of the virtues and the inexhaustible kindness of Mother Marie-des-Anges — in short, she regarded her, after Danton, as the most interesting object of the place, and deeply regretted that she dared not ask to be admitted to her presence.

An hour later the following note was left at the Hôtel de la Poste : —

MADemoisELLE, — I am told that you desire to see me, but that you do not know how to accomplish it. Nothing is easier. Ring the door-bell of my quiet house, ask to see me, and do not be alarmed at my black robe and aged face. I am not one of those who force their advice upon pretty young women who do not ask for it, and who may become in time greater saints than I. That is the whole mystery of obtaining an interview with Mother Marie-des-Anges, who salutes you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ✕

An invitation so graciously given was not to be resisted ; and Mademoiselle Antonia, after putting on the soberest costume she could get together, went to the convent.

I wish I could give you the details of that interview, which must have been curious ; but no one was present, and nothing was known except what the lost sheep, who returned in tears, told of it. When the journalist tried to joke her on this conversion, Mademoiselle Antonia turned upon him.

“Hold your tongue,” she said ; “you never in your life wrote a sentence like what she said to me.”

“What did she say to you?”

“‘Go, my child,’ said that old woman, ‘the ways

of God are beautiful, and little known; there is often more of a saint in a Magdalen than in a nun.’”

The journalist laughed, but scenting danger he said, —

“When are you going again to Gondreville to see that Keller? If he does n’t pay the money soon, I’ll hit him a blow in some article, in spite of all Maxime may say.”

“I don’t play dirty tricks myself,” replied Antonia, with dignity.

“Don’t you? Do you mean you are not going to present that note again?”

“Not now,” replied the admirer and probably the echo of Mother Marie-des-Anges, but using her own language; “I don’t blackmail a family in affliction. I should remember it on my death-bed, and doubt God’s mercy.”

“Why don’t you make yourself an Ursuline, now that we are here?”

“Ha, if I only had the courage! I might be happier if I did. But, in any case, I am not going to Gondreville; Mother Marie-des-Anges has undertaken to arrange that matter for me.”

“Foolish girl! Have you given her that note?”

“I wanted to tear it up, but she prevented me, and told me to give it to her and she would arrange it honestly for my interests.”

“Very fine! You were a creditor, and now you are a beggar.”

“No, for I have given the money in alms. I told madame to keep it for her poor.”

“Oh! if you add the vice of patronizing convents

to your other vice of fishing in rivers, you will be a pleasant girl to frequent."

"You won't frequent me much longer, for I go to-night, and leave you to your dirty work."

"Bless me! so you retire to the Carmelites?"

"The Carmelites!" replied Antonia, wittily; "no, my old fellow, we don't retire to the Carmelites unless we leave a king."

Such women, even the most ignorant, all know the story of La Vallière, whom they would assuredly have made their patroness if Sister Louise-of-the-Sacred-Mercy had been canonized.

I don't know how Mother Marie-des-Anges managed it, but early this morning the carriage of the old Comte de Gondreville stopped before the gate of the convent; and when the count again entered it he was driven to the office of his friend Grévin; and later in the day the latter said to several friends that certainly his son-in-law was too much of a fool, he had compromised himself with that Parisian woman, and would undoubtedly lose his election.

I am told that the rectors of the two parishes in Arcis have each received a thousand crowns for their poor from Mother Marie-des-Anges, who informed them that it came from a benefactor who did not wish his name known. Sallenaue is furious because our partisans are going about saying that the money came from him. But when you are running before the wind you can't mathematically measure each sail, and you sometimes get more of a breeze than you really want.

Monsieur Maxime de Trailles makes no sign, but there is every reason to suppose that this failure of his

candidate, which he must see is now inevitable, will bury both him and his marriage. But, at any rate, he is a clever fellow, who will manage to get his revenge.

What a curious man, madame, this organist is! His name is that of one of our greatest physicians, — though they are not related to each other, — Bricheteau. No one ever showed more activity, more presence of mind, more devotion, more intelligence; and there are not two men in all Europe who can play the organ as he does. You say you do not want Naïs to be a mere piano *strummer*; then I advise you to let this Bricheteau teach her. He is a man who would show her what music really is; he will not give himself airs, for I assure you he is as modest as he is gifted. To Sallenauve he is like a little terrier; as watchful, as faithful, and I may add as ugly, — if so good and frank a countenance as his can ever be thought anything but handsome!

XVII. MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME LA COMTESSE DE  
L'ESTORADE.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, Sunday, May 16, 1839.

MADAME, — Last evening the preparatory meeting took place, — a ridiculous ceremony, very annoying to the candidates, which cannot, however, be avoided.

Perhaps it is natural that before pledging themselves to a man who is to represent them for four or five years, voters should want to question him, and discover, if possible, what he really is. Is he a man of intelligence? Does he really sustain the ideas put forth about him? Will he be cordial and affable to the



various interests which may claim his support? Is he firm in character? Can he defend his ideas — if he has any? In a word, will the constituency be worthily, faithfully, and honestly represented? That is the serious and respectable aspect of this institution, which, not being a part of the law, must, in order to be so firmly fixed in our customs, have a sound reason for its existence.

But every medal has its reverse; as may be seen in these meetings of candidates with electors puffed up by their own self-importance, eager to exercise for a moment the sovereignty they are about to delegate to their deputy, and selling it as dearly as they can to him. Considering the impertinence of certain questions addressed to a candidate, it would really seem as if the latter were a serf over whom each elector had rights of life and death. Not a corner of his private life where the unhappy man is safe from prying curiosity. All things are possible in the line of preposterous questioning; for instance: Why does the candidate prefer the wine of Champagne to the wine of Bordeaux? At Bordeaux, where wine is a religion, this preference implies an idea of non-patriotism and may seriously affect the election. Many voters go to these meetings solely to enjoy the embarrassment of the candidates. Holding them as it were in the pillory, they play with them like a child with a beetle, an old judge with the criminal he examines, or a young surgeon at an autopsy.

Others have not such elevated tastes; they come merely to enjoy the racket, the confusion of tongues which is certain to take place on such occasions. Some

see their opportunity to exhibit a choice talent; for (as they say in the reports of the Chamber) when "the tumult is at its height," a cock is heard to crow or a dog to howl as if his paw were trodden upon, — noises that are imitated with marvellous accuracy. But truly, are not fools and stupid beings a majority in the world, and ought they not to have their representative?

The meeting took place in a large dance-hall, the loft for the orchestra forming a sort of private box to which non-voters were admitted, I among the number. Some ladies had already taken the front seats; Madame Marion, aunt of Simon Giguet, the Left centre candidate; Madame and Mademoiselle Mollet, wife and daughter of the clerk of the court, and some others whose names and position I did not catch. Madame and Mademoiselle Beauvisage shone conspicuously, like Brutus and Cassius, by their absence.

Before the candidacy of Monsieur Beauvisage was brought forward on the ministerial side after the death of Charles Keller, that of Monsieur Simon Giguet was thought to be certain of success. Now, in consequence of that of our friend Sallenaue, who has in turn distanced Beauvisage, Giguet has fallen a step lower still. His father, a former colonel of the Empire, is greatly respected throughout this region. As an expression of regret for not electing his son (according to all probabilities), the electors made him, by acclamation, chairman of the meeting.

The first candidate who was called upon to speak was Simon Giguet; he made a long-winded address, full of commonplaces. Few questions were asked him which deserve a place in the present report. The audience felt that the tug of war was elsewhere.

Monsieur Beauvisage was then summoned; whereupon Maître Achille Pigoult the notary rose, and asked leave to make a statement.

“Monsieur le maire,” he said, “has, since yesterday, been attacked by —”

“Ha! ha!” derisive laughter on the part of the electors.

Colonel Giguet rang his bell repeatedly, without being able to enforce silence. At the first lull Maître Pigoult resumed, —

“I have the honor to inform you, gentlemen, that, attacked by an indisposition which, not serious in itself —”

Fresh interruption, noisier than the first.

Like all military men, Colonel Giguet is not patient nor parliamentary; he therefore rose and called out vehemently, —

“Messieurs, we are not at a circus. I request you to behave in a more seemly manner; if not, I leave the chair.”

It is to be supposed that men in masses like to be handled roughly; for this lesson was greeted with merry applause, after which silence appeared to be firmly re-established.

“I regret to inform you,” began Maître Achille Pigoult, varying his formula for the third time, “that, attacked by an indisposition happily not serious, which may confine him to his chamber —”

“Throat trouble,” suggested a voice.

“— our venerable and excellent mayor,” continued Achille Pigoult, taking no notice of the interruption, “is unable to be present at this meeting. Madame

Beauvisage, with whom I have just had the honor of an interview, requests me to inform you that, *for the present*, Monsieur Beauvisage renounces the honor of receiving your suffrages, and requests those of you who have given him your intelligent sympathy to transfer your votes to Monsieur Simon Giguet."

This Achille Pigoult is a malicious fellow, who intentionally brought in the name of Madame Beauvisage to exhibit her conjugal sovereignty. But the assembly were really too provincial to catch the meaning of that little bit of treachery. Besides, in the provinces, women take part in the most virile affairs of the men. The well-known saying of the vicar's old housekeeper, "We don't say masses at that price," would pass without comment in Champagne.

At last came Sallenaue. I was struck with the ease and quiet dignity of his manner. That is a very reassuring pledge, madame, of his conduct under more trying circumstances; for when a man rises to speak it makes but little difference who and what his audience are. To an orator goaded by fear, great lords and porters are precisely the same thing. They are eyes that look at you, ears that hear you. Individuals are not there, only one huge being, — an assembly, felt as a mass, without analyzing the elements.

After enumerating briefly the ties which connected him with this region, slipping in as he did so an adroit and dignified allusion to his birth which "was not like that of others," Sallenaue stated clearly his political ideas. A Republic he thought the finest of all governments; but he did not believe it possible to establish one in France; consequently, he did not desire it. He

thought that a truly parliamentary government, in which court influence should be so vigorously muzzled that nothing need be feared from its tendency to interference and caballing would best conduce to the dignity and welfare of the nation. Liberty and equality, the two great principles that triumphed in '89, would obtain from such a government the strongest guarantees. As to the manœuvring of the royal power against those principles, it was not for institutions to check it, but for men, — customs, public opinion, rather than laws; and for himself, Sallenauve, he should ever stand in the breach as a living obstacle. He declared himself a warm partisan of free education; believed that greater economy might be exercised in the budget; that too many functionaries were attached to the government; and, above all, that the court was too largely represented in the Chamber. To maintain his independence he was firmly resolved to accept no post and no favors from the government. Neither ought those who might elect him to expect that he would ever take steps on their behalf which were not warranted by reason and by justice. It was said that the word *impossible* was not French. Yet there was an impossibility by which he took pride in being stopped — that of injustice, and that of disloyalty, even the faintest, to the Right. [Loud applause.]

Silence being once more restored, —

“Monsieur,” said one of the electors, after obtaining the floor from the chairman, “you say that you will accept no post under government. Does not that imply reproach to public functionaries? My name is Godivet; I am registrar of the archives, but I do not

consider that a reason why I should incur the contempt of my fellow-citizens."

Sallenaue replied, —

"I am happy, monsieur, to learn that the government has invested a man like you with functions which you fulfil, I am sure, with perfect uprightness and great ability; but I venture to ask if you rose to your present position at one jump?"

"Certainly not, monsieur; I began by being a supernumerary for three years; after that I passed through all the grades; and I can show that favor had nothing to do with my promotion."

"Then, monsieur, what would you say if with my rank as deputy (supposing that I obtain the suffrages of this arrondissement) I, who have never been a supernumerary and never passed through any grades, and whose only claim upon the administration is that of having voted for it, — what would you say if I were suddenly appointed over your head as the director-general of your department?"

"I should say — I should say, monsieur, that the choice was a good one, because the king himself would have made it."

"No, monsieur, you would not say it, or if you said it aloud, which I scarcely think possible, you would think in your heart that the choice was ridiculous and unjust. 'How the devil,' you would say to yourself, 'could this man, this sculptor, know anything about the intricate business of registering archives?' And you would be right in condemning such royal caprice; for what becomes of long and honorable services, justly acquired rights, and steady promotion under such a

system of arbitrary choice? It is that I may not be the accomplice of this crying abuse, because I think it neither just nor honest nor useful to obtain in this way important public functions, that I denounce the system and bind myself to accept no office. Is this, monsieur, pouring contempt on public functions? Is it not rather lifting them to higher honor?"

Monsieur Godivet declared himself satisfied, and said no more.

"*Ah ça!* monsieur," cried another elector, after demanding the floor in a rather tipsy voice, "you say you will ask no favors for your constituents; then what good will you be to us?"

"My friend, I did not say I would ask nothing for my constituents. I said I would ask nothing but what was just; but that, I may add, I shall ask with energy and perseverance, for that is how justice should be followed up."

"But," persisted the voter, "there are various ways of doing justice; witness the suit I was made to lose against Jean Remy, with whom I had trouble about a boundary —"

Colonel Giguët, interrupting, —

"Come, come, you are not going, I hope, to talk about your private affairs, and speak disrespectfully of magistrates?"

The voter resumed, —

"Magistrates, colonel, I respect, for I was one myself for six months in '93, and I know the law. But, returning to my point, I ask monsieur, who is here to answer questions, to me as well as to others, what he thinks about tobacco licenses."

“My opinion on tobacco licenses! That is rather difficult to formulate; I can, however, say that, if my information is correct, they are usually very well distributed.”

“Hey! hey! you’re a man, you!” cried the inebriate elector, “and I’ll vote for you, for they can’t fool you,—no! But they do give those licenses all wrong! Look at that daughter of Jean Remy. Bad neighbor! Never owned anything but his cart, and fights every day with his wife—”

“But, my good fellow,” said the chairman, interposing, “you are abusing the patience of this assembly.”

“No, no! let him talk!” cried voices from all parts of the room.

The voter was amusing, and Sallenaue himself seemed to let the chairman know he would like to see what the man was driving at.

The elector, being allowed to continue, went on:—

“I was going to say, with due respect to you, colonel, about that daughter of Jean Remy’s,—a man I’ll pursue to hell, for my bounds were in their right place, and them experts was all wrong. Well! what did that slut do? Left her father and mother and went to Paris! What did she do there? I did n’t go to see, but I’m told she made acquaintance with a deputy, and has got the tobacco license for the rue Mouffetard, the longest street in Paris. But I’d like to see my wife, widow of an honest man, doubled up with rheumatism for having slept in the woods during that terror in 1815,—I’d like to see my poor widow get a license!”

“But you are not dead yet,” they shouted to him



from all parts of the room. The colonel, meantime, to put an end to the burlesque scene, nodded to a little confectioner who was waiting for the floor, a well-known Republican. The new questioner, in a falsetto voice, put the following insidious question to the candidate, — a question which might, by the way, be called national in Arcis, —

“What does monsieur think of Danton?”

“Monsieur Dauphin,” said the chairman, “I have the honor to remind you that Danton belongs to history.”

“To the Pantheon of history, monsieur; that is the proper expression.”

“Well, history, or the Pantheon of history, as you please; but Danton is irrelevant here.”

“Permit me, Mr. Chairman,” said Sallenaue, “though the question does not seem to have much bearing on the purpose of this meeting, I cannot forego the opportunity thus given me to give proof of the impartiality and independence with which I can judge that great memory, the fame of which still echoes in this town.”

“Hear! hear!” cried the assembly, almost unanimously.

“I am firmly convinced,” resumed Sallenaue, “that if Danton had been born in a calm and peaceful epoch like our own, he would have shown himself, what in fact he was, a good father, a good husband, a warm and faithful friend, a man of kindly temper, who, by the force of his great talents, would have risen to some eminent place in the State and in society.”

“Yes, yes! bravo! very good!”

“Born, on the contrary, in troublous times, and amid the storm of unchained passions, Danton was better constituted than others to kindle the flame of that atmosphere of fire. Danton was the torch that fired; his scarlet glare lent itself only too readily to scenes of blood and horror which I must not recall. But, they said, the national independence was at stake, traitors and dissemblers must be awed, — in a word, a cruel and awful sacrifice was necessary for the public weal. Messieurs, I do not accept that theory. To kill, without the necessity demonstrated a score of times of legitimate defence, to kill women, children, prisoners, unarmed men, was a crime, — a crime, look at it how you will, that was execrable; those who ordered it, those who consented to it, those who executed it are, to my mind, deserving of the same reprobation.”

I wish I could give you an idea, madame, of the tone and expression of Sallenaue as he uttered this anathema. You know how his face is transfigured when an ardent thought comes into his mind. The assemblage was mute and gloomy. Evidently he had wounded its sensibilities; but, under the curb of his powerful hand, it dared not throw up its head.

“But,” he continued, “to all consummated and irreparable crime there are two issues, — repentance and expiation. His repentance Danton did not utter, — he was too proud a man, — but he *acted* it. He was the first, to the sound of that axe falling without pity and without respite, — the first, at the risk of his own head being the next victim, — to call for a ‘committee of mercy.’ It was the sure, the infallible means of

bringing him to expiation ; and you all know whether, when that day of expiation came, he quailed before it. Passing through death, — won by his courageous effort to stop the effusion of blood, — it may be truly said that the face and the memory of Danton have washed off the bloody stain which September put upon them. Committed, at the age of thirty-five, to the judgment of posterity, Danton has left us the memory of a great intellect, a strong and powerful character, noble private qualities, more than one generous action, — all derived from his own being ; whereas the bloody errors he committed were the contagion of his epoch. In a word, with men of his quality, unjust would be the justice which does not temper itself with mercy. And here, messieurs, you have in your midst — better than you, better than I, better than all orators and historians — a woman who has weighed and understood Danton, and who says to the pitiless, with the impulse of her charity, ‘ He has gone to God ; let us pray for him.’ ”

The trap thus avoided by this happy allusion to Mother Marie-des-Anges, and the assembly evidently satisfied, it might be supposed that the candidate had come to the end of his baiting. The colonel was even preparing to pass to the vote, when several electors sprang up, declaring that two important explanations were still required from the candidate. He had said that he should ever be found an obstacle to all attempts of the royal power to subvert our institutions. What did he mean by such resistance? Was it armed resistance, the resistance of riots and barricades?

“Barricades,” replied Sallenaue, “have nearly always seemed to me machines which turned of themselves and crushed the men who raised them. We must believe that in the nature of riots there is something which serves the interests of the government, for I have invariably heard the police accused of inciting them. My resistance, that which I spoke of, will ever be a legal resistance, pursued by legal means, by the press, by the tribune, and with patience, — that great force granted to the oppressed and to the vanquished.

If you knew Latin, madame, I should say to you, *In cauda venenum* ; which means, “In the tail of the serpent is its venom,” — a remark of antiquity which modern science does not admit. Monsieur de l’Estorade was not mistaken ; Sallenaue’s private life was destined to be ransacked, and, no doubt under the inspiration of the virtuous Maxime de Trailles, the second question put to our friend was about the handsome Italian woman said to be *hidden* by him in his house in Paris.

Sallenaue showed no embarrassment at being thus interpellated. He merely asked whether the assembly would think proper to spend its time in listening to a romantic story in which there was no scandal.

But here comes Sallenaue himself ; he tells me that the electoral college is formed in a manner that leaves little doubt of his election. I leave my pen to him, to tell you the romantic tale, already, I believe, interrupted on several occasions. He will close this letter.

XVIII. CHARLES DE SALLENAUVE TO THE COMTESSE DE  
L'ESTORADE.

7 P. M.

MADAME, — The rather abrupt manner in which I parted from you and from Monsieur de l'Estorade the evening of our visit to Armand's school, has been explained to you by the preoccupations of all sorts to which at that moment I was a victim. Marie-Gaston tells me that he has kept you informed of the subsequent events.

I acknowledge that in the restless and agitated state of mind in which I then was, the sort of belief which Monsieur de l'Estorade appeared to give to the scandal which he mentioned caused me great displeasure and some surprise. How, thought I, is it possible that a man of Monsieur de l'Estorade's morality and intellect can *a priori* suppose me capable of such disorder, when he sees me anxious to give to my life all the weight and consideration which the respect of others alone can bestow? Only a few moments before this painful conversation I had been on the point of making you a confidence which would, I presume, have protected me against the unfortunate impression which Monsieur de l'Estorade conveyed to your mind. As for Monsieur de l'Estorade himself, I was, I confess, so annoyed at seeing the careless manner in which he made himself the echo of a calumny against which I felt he ought rather to have defended me that I did not *deign* to make any explanation to him. I now withdraw that word, but it was then the true expression of a displeasure keenly felt,

In the course of my electoral contest, I have been obliged to make public the justification I did not make to you ; and I have had the satisfaction of finding that men in masses are more capable than individuals of understanding generous impulses and of distinguishing the honest language of truth. Here are the facts which I related, but more briefly and with less detail, to my electors.

A few months before my departure from Rome, I was in a café frequented by the pupils of the Academy, when an Italian musician, named Benedetto, came in, as he usually did every evening. Nominally he was a musician and a tolerable one ; but we had been warned that he was also a spy of the Roman police. However that might be, he was very amusing ; and as we cared nothing for the police, we not only endured but we encouraged his visits, — which was not hard to do in view of his passion for *poncio spongato* and *spuma di latte*.

On his entrance one evening, a member of our party asked him who was the woman with whom he had met him that morning.

“ My wife, signore,” answered the Italian.

“ Yours, Benedetto ! — you the husband of such a beauty ! ”

“ Sì, signore.”

“ Nonsense ! you are ugly and drunken, and people say you are a police spy ; but she, on the contrary, is as handsome as Diana the huntress.”

“ I charmed her with my talent ; she adores me.”

“ Well, if she is your wife, make her pose to our friend here, Dorlange, who wants a model for his Pandora. He can't get a finer one.”

“That can be managed,” replied the Italian.

The next day I was in my studio in company with several young painters and sculptors when Benedetto came in accompanied by a woman of rare beauty, whom I need not describe, for you have seen her, madame, at my house. A joyous hurrah greeted the Italian, who said to me, —

“*Ecco la Pandora!* Hey! what do you think of her?”

“Marvellously beautiful; but would she pose?”

“Pooh!” exclaimed Benedetto, with an air which seemed to say: “I’d like to see her refuse.”

“But,” I remarked, “she would cost too much, a model of her beauty.”

“No; you need only make my bust — just a plaster cast — and give it to her.”

“Very good,” I said. Then I told my friends to go and leave us alone together.

Nobody minded me. Judging the wife by the husband, the eager young fellows pressed round her; while she, wounded and angered by the audacity of their eyes, looked like a caged panther irritated by peasants at a fair.

Going up to her and pulling her aside, Benedetto told her in Italian that I wanted to copy her from head to foot, and she must then and there take off her clothes. The woman gave him one withering look, and made for the door. Benedetto rushed forward to prevent her; while my comrades, for the honor of the studio, endeavored to bar his way.

Then began an argument between the wife and the husband; but, as I saw that Benedetto sustained his

part of it with great brutality, I was angry, and, having a pretty vigorous arm, I pushed him aside, and took the wife, who was trembling all over, to the door. She said, in Italian, a few words of thanks, and disappeared instantly.

Returning to Benedetto, who was gesticulating furiously, I told him to leave the studio, that his conduct was infamous, and if I heard of his ill-treating his wife I would have him punished.

"*Debole!*" (idiot!) he replied, shrugging his shoulders, and departing amid derisive cheers.

Several days passed, and no signs of Benedetto. By the end of a week he was forgotten. Three days before my departure from Rome his wife entered my studio.

"You are leaving Rome," she said, "and I want you to take me with you."

"Take you with me! — but your husband?"

"Dead," she answered tranquilly.

A thought crossed my mind.

"Did you kill him?" I said.

She made an affirmative sign, adding, "But I mean to die too."

"How was it?" I asked.

"After he offered me that affront," she replied, "he came home and beat me, as he often did; then he went out and was gone all day. At night he returned with a pistol and threatened to shoot me; but I got the pistol away from him, for he was drunk. I threw him — the *briccone!* — on his bed, and he fell asleep. Then I stuffed up the doors and windows, and lighted the charcoal brazier. My head ached horribly, and I knew



nothing more till the next day, when I woke up in the hands of my neighbors. They had smelt the charcoal, and burst in the door, — but he was dead.”

“And the law?”

“I told the judge everything. Besides, *he* had tried to sell me to an Englishman, — that’s why he wanted to disgrace me here with you; he thought I would resist less. The judge told me I might go, I had done right; then I confessed to a priest, and he gave me absolution.”

“But, *cara mia*, what can you do in France? Better stay in Italy; besides, I am not rich.”

She smiled disdainfully.

“I shall not cost you much,” she said; “on the contrary, I can save you money.”

“How so?”

“I can be the model for your statues if I choose. Besides which, I am a capital housekeeper. If Benedetto had behaved properly, we should have had a good home, — *per che*, I know how to make one; and I’ve another great talent too!”

She ran to a guitar, which was hanging on the wall, and began to sing a bravura air, accompanying herself with singular energy.

“In France,” she said, when she had finished, “I could take lessons and go upon the stage, where I know I should succeed; that was Benedetto’s idea.”

“But why not do that in Italy?”

“I am hiding from that Englishman,” she replied; “he wants to carry me off. I am determined to go to France; I have learned to speak French. If I stay here, I shall throw myself into the Tiber.”

By abandoning such a nature, more terrible than seductive, to itself, Monsieur de l'Estorade will, I think, agree that I was likely to cause some misfortune. I consented, therefore, that Signora Luigia should accompany me to Paris. Since then she has managed my household with discretion and economy. She even offered to pose for my Pandora; but the memory of that scene with her husband has, as you may well believe, kept me from accepting her offer. I have given her a singing-master, and she is now almost prepared to make her appearance on the stage. But in spite of her theatrical projects, she, pious like all Italians, has joined the sisterhood of the Virgin in Saint-Sulpice, my parish church, and during the month of May, which began a few days ago, the letter of chairs counts on her beautiful voice for part of her receipts. She is assiduous at the services, confesses, and takes the sacrament regularly. Her confessor, a most respectable old man, came to see me lately to request that she might not be required to pose for any more of my statues, saying that she would not listen to him on that point, believing herself bound in honor to me.

My own intention, if I am elected, which now seems probable, is to separate from this woman. In a position which will place me more before the public, she would become an object of remark as injurious to her reputation and future prospects as to mine. I have talked with Marie-Gaston about the difficulty I foresee in making this separation. Until now, my house has been the whole of Paris to this poor woman; and the thought of flinging her alone into the gulf, of which she knows nothing, horrifies me.

Marie-Gaston thinks that the help and advice of a person of her own sex, with a high reputation for virtue and good judgment, would be in such a case most efficacious; and he declares that he and I both know a lady who, at our earnest entreaty, might take this duty upon herself. The person to whom Marie-Gaston makes allusion is but a recent acquaintance of mine, and I could hardly ask even an old friend to take such a care upon her shoulders. I know, however, that you once did me the honor to say that "certain relations ripen rapidly." Marie-Gaston insists that this lady, being kind and pious and most charitable, will be attracted by the idea of helping and advising a poor lonely woman. On our return to Paris, madame, we shall venture to consult you, and you will tell us whether we may ask for this precious assistance.

In any case, I will ask you to be my intermediary with Monsieur de l'Estorade; tell him the facts I have now told you, and say that I hope the little cloud between us may be effectually removed. If I am elected, we shall be, I know, in opposite camps; but as my intention is not to take a tone of systematic opposition in all the questions which may arise between our parties, I do not think there *need* be any break between us.

By this time to-morrow, madame, I may have received a checkmate which will send me back forever to my studio, or I shall have my foot in a new career. Shall I tell you that the thought of the latter result distresses me?—doubtless from a fear of the Unknown.

I was almost forgetting to give you another piece

of news. I have consulted Mother Marie-des-Anges (whose history Marie-Gaston tells me he has related to you) on the subject of my doubts and fears as to the violence done to Mademoiselle de Lanty, and she has promised that in course of time she will discover the convent in which Marianina is a prisoner. The worthy Mother, if she takes this into her head, is almost certain to succeed in finding the original of her Saint-Ursula.

I am not feeling at all easy in mind about Marie-Gaston. He seems to me in a state of feverish agitation, partly created by the immense interest he takes in my success. But I greatly fear that his efforts will result in a serious reaction. His own grief, which at this moment he is repressing, has not in reality lost its sting. Have you not been struck by the rather flighty and mocking tone of his letters, some of which he has shown to me? That is not in his nature, for in his happiest days he was never turbulently gay; and I am sadly afraid that when this fictitious excitement about my election is over he may fall into utter prostration. He has, however, consented to come and live with me, and not to go to Ville d'Avray unless I am with him. Even this act of prudence, which I asked without hoping to obtain it, makes me uneasy. Evidently he is afraid of the memories that await him there. Have I the power to lessen the shock? Old Philippe, who was left in charge of the place when he went to Italy, had orders not to move or change anything whatever in the house. Our friend is therefore likely to find himself, in presence of those speaking objects, on the morrow as it were of his wife's death. Another

alarming thing! he has only spoken of her once, and will not suffer me to approach the subject. I hope, however, that this may be a crisis; once passed, I trust we may, by all uniting, succeed in composing his mind.

Victor or vanquished, I trust to meet you soon, madame, and always as your most respectful and devoted servant,

CHARLES DE SALLENAUVE.

XIX. MARIE-GASTON TO THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, May 15, 1839.

That stupid riot in Paris, the incredible particulars of which we heard this morning by telegraph, came near causing us to lose the election.

The sub-prefect instantly placarded all over the town the news of this attempt at insurrection — no doubt instigated by the government to affect the elections. “What! elect a democrat!” was repeated everywhere in Arcis, and doubtless elsewhere, “so that his speeches in the Chamber may be made the ammunition of insurgents!”

That argument threw our phalanx into disorder and hesitation. But the idea occurred to Jacques Briche-teau to turn the danger itself to good account, and he hastily printed on a sheet of paper and distributed all over the town in enormous quantities the following notice: —

“A bloody riot took place yesterday in Paris. Questioned as to the employment of such guilty and desperate means of opposition, one of our candidates, Monsieur de Sallenaue, answered thus: ‘Riots will always be found to serve the

interests of the government; for this reason the police are invariably accused of inciting them. True resistance, that which I stand for, will always be legal resistance, pursued by legal means, by the press, by the tribune, and with Patience — that great force granted to the oppressed and to the vanquished.’ ”

These words, you will remember, madame, were those in which Sallenaue answered his questioners at the preparatory meeting. Then followed in large letters : —

“ THE RIOT HAS BEEN SUPPRESSED. WHO WILL PROFIT BY IT ?

That sheet of paper did marvels ; it completely foiled the efforts of Monsieur de Trailles, who, throwing off the mask, had spent his day in perorating, in white gloves, on the market-place and from the steps of the electoral college.

This evening the result is known ; namely, two hundred and one votes cast : two for Beauvisage ; twenty-nine for Simon Giguet ; one hundred and seventy for Sallenaue.

Consequently, Monsieur Charles de Sallenaue is proclaimed Deputy.

PART THIRD.

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.

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I.

THE SORROWS OF MONSIEUR DE TRAILLES.

DURING the evening which followed the election in which he had played a part so humiliating to his vanity, Maxime de Trailles returned to Paris. It might be supposed that in making, on his arrival, a rapid toilet and ordering his carriage to be instantly brought round, he was hastening to pay a visit to the Comte de Rastignac, minister of Public Works, to whom he must have desired to render an account of his mission, and explain as best he could the reasons of its ill-success.

But another and more pressing interest seemed to claim him.

“To Colonel Franchessini’s,” he said to his coachman.

Arriving at the gate of one of the prettiest hôtels in the *quartier* Bréda, and nodding to the concierge, he received an affirmative sign, which meant, “Monsieur is at home;” and at the same time a valet appeared on the portico to receive him.

“Is the colonel visible?” he asked.

“He has just gone into madame’s room. Does monsieur wish me to call him?”

“No, I’ll wait for him in the study.”

Then, like one familiar with the house, and without waiting for the servant to usher him, he entered a large room on the ground-floor, which looked into a garden, and was filled with a miscellaneous collection of articles testifying to the colonel’s habits and tastes. Books, charts, and maps certainly justified the word “study;” but, as a frantic sportsman and member of the Jockey Club, the colonel had allowed this sanctum of mental labor and knowledge to become, by degrees, his smoking, fencing, and harness room. Pipes and weapons of all shapes and all lands, saddles, hunting-whips, spurs, bits of many patterns, foils and boxing-gloves formed a queer and heterogeneous collection. However, by thus surrounding his daily life with the objects of his favorite *studies*, the colonel proved himself a man who possessed the courage of his opinions. In fact, he openly said that, beyond a passing notice, there was no reading worth a man’s attention except the “Stud Journal.”

It is to be supposed, however, that politics had managed in some way to slip into this existence devoted to muscular exercise and the hippic science, for, from a heap of the morning journals disdainfully flung upon the floor by the worthy colonel, Monsieur de Trailles picked up a copy of the legitimist organ, in which he read, under the heading of ELECTIONS, the following article:—

“The staff of the National Guard and the Jockey Club, which had various representatives in the last Chamber, have



just sent one of their shining notabilities to the one about to open. Colonel Franchessini, so well known for his ardor in punishing the refractories of the National Guard, has been elected almost unanimously in one of the rotten boroughs of the civil list. It is supposed that he will take his seat beside the phalanx of other henchmen, and show himself in the Chamber, as he has elsewhere, one of the firmest supporters of the policy of the *present order of things*."

As Maxime finished reading this article, the colonel entered.

After serving the Empire for a very short time, Colonel Franchessini had become one of the most brilliant colonels of the Restoration; but in consequence of certain mists which had risen about the perfect honorableness of his character he had found himself obliged to send in his resignation, so that in 1830 he was fully prepared to devote himself in the most ardent manner to the dynasty of July. He did not re-enter military service, because, shortly after his misadventure he had met with an Englishwoman, enormously rich, who being taken with his beauty, worthy at that time of the Antinous, had made him her husband, and the colonel henceforth contented himself with the epaulets of the staff of the National Guard. He became, in that position, one of the most exacting and turbulent of blusterers, and through the influence of that quality combined with the fortune his wife had given him, he had just been elected, as the paper stated, to the Chamber of deputies. Approaching the fifties, like his friend de Trailles, Colonel Franchessini had still some pretensions to the after-glow of youth, which his slim figure and agile military bearing seemed likely to

preserve to him for some time longer. Although he had conquered the difficulty of his gray hair, reducing its silvery reflections by keeping it cut very close, he was less resigned to the scantiness of his moustache, which he wore in youthful style, twirled to a sharp point by means of a Hungarian cosmetic, which also preserved to a certain degree its primitive color. But whoso wants to prove too much proves nothing, and in the black which the colonel used there was noticeably a raw tone, and an equality of shade too perfect for truth of nature. Hence his countenance, swarthy and strongly marked with the Italian origin indicated by his name, had an expression of singular rigidity, to which his features, now become angular, his piercing glance, and his nose like the beak of a bird of prey, did not afford the requisite corrective.

"Hey, Maxime!" he cried, shaking hands with his visitor, "where the devil do you come from? It is more than a fortnight since I have seen you at the club."

"Where do I come from?" replied Monsieur de Trailles. "I'll tell you presently; but first let me congratulate you on your election."

"Yes," said the colonel, with apparent indifference, "*they* would put me up; but I assure you, upon my honor, I was very innocent of it all, and if no one had done more than I —"

"But, my dear fellow, you are a blessed choice for that arrondissement; I only wish that the electors I have had to do with were equally intelligent."

"What! have you been standing for election? I did n't suppose, taking into consideration the — rather

troubled state of your finances, that you could manage it."

"True, and I was not electioneering on my own account. Rastignac was very uneasy about the arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube, and he asked me to go down there for a few days."

"Arcis-sur-Aube? Seems to me I read an article about that this morning in one of those cabbage-leaves. Horrid choice, isn't it? — some plasterer or image-maker they propose to send us?"

"Precisely; and it is about that very thing I have come to see you before I see the others. I have just arrived, and I don't want to go to Rastignac until after I have talked with you."

"How is he getting on, that little minister?" said the colonel, taking no notice of the clever steps by which Maxime was gravitating toward the object of his visit. "They seem to be satisfied with him at the palace. Do you know that little Nucingen whom he married?"

"Yes, I often see Rastignac; he is a very old acquaintance of mine."

"She is pretty, that little thing," continued the colonel, "very pretty; and I think, the first year of marriage well buried, one might risk one's self in that direction with some success."

"Come, come," said Maxime, "you are a serious man now, a legislator! As for me, the mere meddling in electoral matters in the interests of other people has sobered me."

"Did you say you went to Arcis-sur-Aube to hinder the election of that stone-cutter?"

“Not at all; I went there to throw myself in the way of the election of a Left-centre candidate.”

“Pah! the Left, pure and simple, is hardly worse. But take a cigar; these are excellent. The princes smoke them.”

The colonel rose and rang the bell, saying to the servant when he came, “A light!”

The cigars lighted, Monsieur de Trailles endeavored to prevent another interruption by declaring before he was questioned that he had never smoked anything more exquisite. Comfortably ensconced in his arm-chair, the colonel seemed to offer the hope of a less fugacious attention, and Monsieur de Trailles resumed: —

“All went well at first. To crush the candidate the ministry wanted to be rid of, — a lawyer, and the worst sort of cad, — I unearthed a stocking-maker, a fearful fool, whom I persuaded to offer himself as candidate. The worthy man was convinced that he belonged to the dynastic opposition. That is the opinion which, for the time being, prevails in that region. The election, thanks to me, was as good as made; and, our man once in Paris, the great Seducer in the Tuileries had only to say five words to him, and this dynastic opposer could have been turned inside out like one of his own stockings, and made to do whatever was wanted of him.”

“Pretty well played that!” said the colonel. “I recognize my Maxime.”

“You will recognize him still farther when he tells you that he was able, without recourse to perquisites, to make his own little profit out of the affair. In

order to graft a little parliamentary ambition upon my vegetable, I addressed myself to his wife, — a rather appetizing provincial, though past her prime.”

“Yes, yes, I see; very good!” said Franchessini; “husband made deputy — satisfied — shut his mouth.”

“You are all wrong, my dear fellow; the pair have an only daughter, a spoilt child, nineteen years old, very agreeable face, and something like a million in her pocket.”

“But, my dear Maxime, I passed your tailor’s house last night, and it was not illuminated.”

“No; that would have been premature. However, here was the situation: two women frantic to get to Paris; gratitude to the skies for the man who would get them an introduction to the Palais-Bourbon; the little one crazy for the title of countess; the mother transported at the idea, carefully insinuated by me, of holding a political salon, — you must see all that such a situation offers, and you know me too well, I fancy, to suppose that I should fall below any of its opportunities.”

“Quite easy in mind as to that,” said the colonel, getting up to open a window and let out the smoke of their two cigars.

“I was on the point,” continued Maxime, “of pocketing both daughter and *dot*, when there fell from the skies, or rather there rose from the nether regions, a Left candidate, the stone-cutter, as you call him, a man with two names, — in short, a natural son —”

“Ha!” said the colonel, “those fellows do have lucky stars, to be sure. I am not surprised if one of them mowed the grass from under your feet.”

“My dear friend,” said Maxime, “if we were in the

middle ages, I should explain by magic and sorcery the utter discomfiture of my candidate, and the election of the stone-man, whom you are fated to have for your colleague. How is it possible to believe, what is however the fact, that an old *tricoteuse*, a former friend of Danton, and now the abbess of a convent of Ursulines, should actually, by the help of her nephew, an obscure organist in Paris, have so bewitched the whole electoral college that this 'upstart has been elected by a large majority? "

" But I suppose he had some friends and acquaintances in the town? "

" Not the ghost of one, — unless it might be that nun. Fortune, relations, father, even a name, he never had until the day of his arrival at Arcis two weeks ago; and now, if you please, the Comte Charles de Sallenauve, seigneur of the château of Arcis, is elected to the Chamber of deputies! God only knows how it was done! The pretended head of a former great family, representing himself as absent in foreign lands for many years, suddenly appears with this schemer before a notary in Arcis, recognizes him at a gallop as his son, buys the château of Arcis and presents it to him, and is off during the night before any one could even know what road he took. The trick thus played, the abbess and her aide-de-camp, the organist, launched the candidate, and at once republicans, legitimists, conservatives, clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie, in fact everybody, as if by some spell cast upon that region, all did the bidding of that old witch of a nun, and without the stalwart battalion of the functionaries (who under my eye stood firm and did not

finch), his election would have been, like yours, unanimous."

"Then, my poor friend, good-bye to the *dot*."

"Not precisely; though it must certainly be adjourned. The father grumbles because the blessed tranquillity of his life was disturbed and he himself covered with ridicule, though the poor dear man had already enough of that! The daughter still wants to be a countess, but the mother takes it hard that her political salon should be floating away from her, and God knows how far I shall be led in order to comfort her. Besides all this, I myself am goaded by the necessity of having to find the solution of my own problem pretty soon. I *had* found it there: I intended to marry, and take a year to settle my affairs; at the next session I should have made my father-in-law resign and stepped into his seat in the Chamber; then, you understand, what an horizon before me!"

"But, my dear fellow, political horizon apart, don't let that million slip through your fingers."

"Oh, heavens! as for that, except for the delay, I feel safe enough. My future family is about to remove to Paris. After this mortifying defeat, life in Arcis will not be endurable. Beauvisage (forgive the name, it is that of my adopted family) — Beauvisage is like Coriolanus, ready if he can to bring fire and slaughter on his ungrateful birthplace. Besides, in transplanting themselves hither, these unfortunate exiles know where to lay their heads, being the owners of the hôtel Beauséant."

"Owners of the hôtel Beauséant!" cried the colonel, in amazement.

“Yes; Beauséant — Beauvisage; only a termination to change. Ah! my dear fellow, you don’t know what these provincial fortunes are, accumulated penny by penny, especially when to the passion for saving is added the incessant aspiration of that leech called commerce. We must make up our minds to some course; the bourgeoisie are rising round us like a flood; it is almost affable in them to buy our châteaux and estates when they might guillotine us as in 1793, and get them for nothing.”

“Happily for you, my dear Maxime, you have reduced the number of your châteaux and estates.”

“You see yourself that is not so,” replied Maxime, “inasmuch as I am now engaged in providing myself with one. The Beauséant house is to be repaired and refurnished immediately, and I am charged with the ordering of the work. But I have made my future mother-in-law another promise, and I want your help, my dear fellow, in fulfilling it.”

“It isn’t a tobacco license, or a stamped-paper office, is it?”

“No, something less difficult. These damned women, when hatred or a desire for vengeance takes possession of them, are marvels of instinct; and Madame Beauvisage, who roars like a lioness at the very name of Sallenaue, has taken it into her head that beneath his incomprehensible success there is some foul intrigue or mystery. It is certain that the appearance and disappearance of this mysterious father have given rise to very singular conjectures; and probably if the thumb-screws were put upon the organist, who was, they say, intrusted with the education of the interest-



ing bastard, we might get the secret of his birth and possibly other unexpected revelations. Now I have thought of a man on whom you have, I believe, great influence, who might in this hunt for facts assist us immensely. Don't you remember the robbery of those jewels from Jenny Cadine, about which she was so unhappy one night at Véry's? You asked the waiter for pens and paper, and on a simple note which you sent at three o'clock in the morning to a Monsieur Saint-Estève the police went to work, and before the evening of the next day the thieves were captured and the jewels restored."

"Yes," said the colonel, "I remember all that; my interference was lucky. But I must tell you that had I paused to reflect I should not have treated Monsieur de Saint-Estève so cavalierly. He is a man to be approached with greater ceremony."

"*Ah ça!* but is n't he a former galley-slave, whose pardon you helped to obtain, and who feels for you the veneration they say Fieschi felt for one of his protectors?"

"Yes, that is true. Monsieur de Saint-Estève, like his predecessor, Bibi-Lupin, has had *misfortunes*; but he is to-day the head of the detective police, the important functions of which office he fulfils with rare capacity. If the matter concerned anything that comes within his department, I should not hesitate to give you a letter to him; but the affair you speak of is delicate; and in any case I must first sound him and see if he is willing to talk with you."

"I thought you managed him despotically. Let us say no more about it, if you think it so very difficult."

"The greatest difficulty is that I never see him ; and I naturally cannot write to him for such an object. I should have to watch for an occasion, a chance meeting. But why don't you speak of this to Rastignac? He could give him an order to act at once."

"Don't you understand that Rastignac will receive me very ill indeed? I had assured him, by letter, of success, and now I am forced to report in person our defeat. Besides, on every account, I would rather owe this service to your friendship."

"Well, it sha'n't fail you," said the colonel, rising. "I'll do my best to satisfy you ; only, there must be a delay."

The visit had lasted long, and Maxime felt that a hint was given him to abridge it. He therefore took leave, putting into his manner a certain coldness which the colonel appeared not to notice.

No sooner had Monsieur de Trailles departed than Franchessini opened a pack of cards and took out the knave of spades. This he cut up in a curious manner, leaving the figure untouched. Placing this species of hieroglyphic between two sheets of paper, he consigned it to an envelope. On this envelope and disguising his hand the colonel wrote as follows : —

"Monsieur de Saint-Estève, rue Sainte-Anne, near the Quai des Orfèvres."

That done, he rang the bell and gave orders to put up his carriage, which he had ordered before Maxime's arrival ; after which he went out alone on foot, and threw his singular missive into the first street letter-box that he passed. He had taken care, before he left the house, to see if it were properly sealed.

## II.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ELEVEN O'CLOCK AND  
MIDNIGHT.

As a result of the elections which had just taken place, the ministry, contrary to expectation, maintained a majority in the Chamber, — a doubtful and provisional majority which would give it an uncertain and struggling existence. But, at any rate, it had obtained that merely numerical success which parties seek at any price to prolong their power. The *Te Deum* was sung in all its camps, — a pæan which serves as well to celebrate victorious defeats as honest victories.

On the evening of the day when Colonel Franchessini received the visit from Maxime de Trailles, the general result of the elections was made known. The ministers of the left bank, whose wives received on that day, found their salons crowded, particularly the Comte de Rastignac, the minister of Public Works.

Madame de l'Estorade, too much absorbed in her children to be very exact in the fulfilment of her social duties, had owed a visit to Madame de Rastignac ever since the evening when the minister's wife had interrupted her conversation with the sculptor apropos of the famous statue. Monsieur de l'Estorade, zealous conservative as we know already, had insisted that

politics and politeness now combined to oblige them both to pay this social debt. Arriving early, in order to be rid the sooner of such a bore, Madame de l'Estorade found herself seated at the upper end of a circle of women, while the men stood about them conversing. Her chair was side by side with that of Madame de Rastignac.

In hoping to make her visit short, Madame de l'Estorade had not counted on the allurements of conversation which, under the circumstances of this so-called political victory, laid hold of her husband. A man of more influence by his judgment than by his oratory in the Chamber of Peers, Monsieur de l'Estorade, as he circulated through the salons, was stopped at every turn by the various notabilities of politics, finance, and diplomacy, and requested to give his opinion on the future of the session now about to begin. To all such questions he replied with more or less extended observations, and sometimes he had the pleasure of finding himself the centre of a group respectfully receptive of his opinions. This success rendered him very inattentive to the telegraphy of his wife, who, watching his various evolutions, made him signs whenever she could catch his eye that she wished to go away.

The years that had elapsed since Monsieur de l'Estorade had obtained the hand of the beautiful Renée de Maucombe, while they had scarcely dimmed the splendor of her beauty, had considerably aged her husband. The twenty years' difference in their ages — he being now fifty-two, she thirty-two — was growing all the more apparent because even at the time of the marriage he was turning gray and his health was failing.

An affection of the liver, latent for several years, was now developing, and at the same time the wilful disposition which is noticeable in statesmen and men of ambition made his mouth less sensitive to the conjugal bit. Monsieur de l'Estorade talked so long and so well that after a time the salons thinned, leaving a group of the intimates of the house around his wife and their hostess. At this moment the minister himself slipped an arm through his, and, leading him up to the group surrounding their two wives, Rastignac said to Madame de l'Estorade, —

“I bring you back your husband ; I have just found him in criminal conversation with a member of the Zollverein, who would probably have clung to him all night if it had not been for me.”

“I was myself on the point of asking Madame de Rastignac for a bed, that I might release her from the burden of my company, which Monsieur de l'Estorade's interminable conversations have put upon her.”

Madame de Rastignac protested that, on the contrary, she desired to enjoy as long as possible Madame de l'Estorade's company, only regretting that she had been so often obliged to interrupt their conversation to receive those strange objects, the newly fledged deputies, who had come in relays to make their bow to her.

“Oh ! my dear,” cried Rastignac, “here's the session about to open, and we really must not take these disdainful airs toward the elect of the nation. Besides which, you will get into difficulties with madame, who, I am told, is the protectress of one of these sovereigns of late date.”

“I?” said Madame de l’Estorade, rather surprised, and blushing a little. She had one of those complexions, still fresh and dazzling, which are predisposed to these flushes of color.

“Ah! true,” said Madame de Rastignac; “I had forgotten that artist who cut out the pretty figures for your children the last time I had the pleasure of paying you a visit. I own I was far from thinking then that he would be one of our masters.”

“And yet, ever since then,” replied Madame de l’Estorade, “his election has been talked about; though it must be owned that until now no one thought seriously of it.”

“I did,” said Monsieur de l’Estorade, rather eagerly, seizing the occasion to put another star to his reputation for prophecy; “from the first political conversation that I had with him I said — and Monsieur de Ronquerolles is here to bear me out — that I was surprised at the ability and the breadth of aim he manifested.”

“Certainly,” said the personage thus interpellated, “he is not an ordinary fellow; but I do not believe in his future. He is a man who goes by the first impulsion, and, as Monsieur de Talleyrand has wisely remarked, the first impulse is the good impulse.”

“Well, monsieur?” inquired Madame de l’Estorade, ingenuously.

“Well, madame,” replied Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who was vain of his scepticism, “heroism is not of our day; it is heavy baggage, horribly embarrassing, which gets us into mud-holes continually.”

“Nevertheless, I believe that great qualities of heart

and mind have some share in the composition of a distinguished man."

"Qualities of mind? Yes, you are right there, provided always they work in a certain direction. But as for qualities of the heart in political life, what good are they? — to hoist you on stilts with which you can't walk as well as you can on the ground, and from which you are liable to fall and break your neck at the first push."

"At that rate," said Madame de Rastignac, laughing, while Madame de l'Estorade was silent, disdaining to reply, "the political world must be peopled by none but scoundrels."

"That is so, madame, — ask Lazarille;" and as he made this allusion to a famous stage joke, he laid his hand on the minister's shoulder.

"My dear fellow," said Rastignac, "I think your generalities are a little too particular."

"No, no; but come," returned Monsieur de Ronquerolles, "let us talk seriously. To my knowledge, this Monsieur de Sallenaue — that is the name I think he has taken in exchange for Dorlange, which he himself called theatrical — has done, within a short time, two fine actions. I, being present and assisting, saw him stand up to be killed by the Duc de Rhétoré, on account of certain ill-sounding words said about a friend. Those words, in the first place, he could not help hearing; and having heard them it was, I will not say his duty, but his *right* to resent them."

"Ah!" said Madame de Rastignac, "then it was he who fought that duel people said so much about?"

“Yes, madame, and I ought to say — for I understand such matters — that at the meeting he behaved with consummate bravery.”

To avoid the recital of the second fine action, Madame de l’Estorade, at the risk of impolitely cutting short a topic thus begun, rose, and made an almost imperceptible sign to her husband that she wished to go. But Monsieur de l’Estorade took advantage of its faintness to stay where he was.

Monsieur de Ronquerolles continued: —

“His other fine action was to throw himself in front of some runaway horses to save madame’s daughter from imminent death.”

All eyes turned on Madame de l’Estorade, who, this time, blushed deeply; but recovering speech, if only in order to seem composed, she said with feeling, —

“According to your theory of heroism you must think Monsieur de Sallenaue very foolish to have thus risked his life and his future; but I assure you that there is one woman who will never agree with you, and that is — the mother of my child.”

As she said the words, tears were in Madame de l’Estorade’s voice; she pressed Madame de Rastignac’s hand affectionately, and made so decided a movement to leave the room that she finally put in motion her immovable husband.

“Thank you,” said Madame de Rastignac, as she accompanied her to the door, “for having broken a lance with that cynic; Monsieur de Rastignac’s past life has left him with odious acquaintances.”

As she resumed her place, Monsieur de Ronquerolles was saying, —



“Ha! saved her child’s life indeed! The fact is that poor l’Estorade is turning as yellow as a lemon.”

“Ah, monsieur, but that is shocking,” cried Madame de Rastignac. “A woman whom no breath of slander has ever touched; who lives only for her husband and children; whose eyes were full of tears at the mere thought of the danger the child had run! —”

“Heavens! madame,” retorted Monsieur de Ronquerolles, paying no heed to the rebuke, “all I can say is that newfoundlands are always dangerous. If Madame de l’Estorade becomes too much compromised, she has one resource, — she can marry him to the girl he saved.”

Monsieur de Ronquerolles had no sooner said the words than he perceived the horrible blunder he had committed in making such a speech before Mademoiselle de Nucingen. He colored high, — a most unusual sign in him, — and the solemn silence which seemed to wrap all present completed his discomfiture.

“This clock must be slow,” said the minister, catching at any words that would make a sound and break up an evening that was ending unfortunately.

“True,” said de Ronquerolles, looking at his watch; “it is a quarter to twelve.”

He bowed to Madame de Rastignac ceremoniously, and went away, followed by the rest of the company.

“You saw his embarrassment,” said Rastignac to his wife; “he had no malicious intention in what he said.”

“It is of no consequence. I was saying just now to Madame de l’Estorade that your past life had given you a number of detestable acquaintances.”

“But, my dear, the King himself is compelled to smile graciously on men he would fain put in the Bastille, — if we still had a Bastille and the Charter permitted him.”

Madame de Rastignac made no reply, and without bidding her husband good-night, she went up to her room. A few moments later the minister went to the private door which led into it, and, not finding the key in the lock, he said, “Augusta!” in the tone of voice a simple bourgeois might have used in such a case.

For all answer, he heard a bolt run hastily on the other side of the door.

“Ah!” he thought to himself with a gesture of vexation, “there are some pasts very different from that door, — they are always wide open to the present.”

Then, after a moment’s silence, he added, to cover his retreat, “Augusta, I wanted to ask you what hour Madame de l’Estorade receives. I ought to call upon her to-morrow, after what happened here to-night.”

“At four o’clock,” said the young wife through the door, — “on her return from the Tuileries, where she takes the children to walk every day.”

One of the questions that were frequently put by Parisian society after the marriage of Madame de Rastignac was: “Does she love her husband?”

The doubt was permissible. The marriage of Made-moiselle de Nucingen was the unpleasant and scarcely moral product of one of those immoral unions which find their issue in the life of a daughter, after years and satiety have brought them to a condition of dry-rot and paralysis. In such marriages of *convenience* the husband is satisfied, for he escapes a happiness which

has turned rancid to him, and he profits by a speculation like that of the magician in the "Arabian Nights" who exchanges old lamps for new. But the wife, on the contrary, must ever feel a living memory between herself and her husband; a memory which may revive, and while wholly outside of the empire of the senses, has the force of an old authority antagonistic to her young influence. In such a position the wife is a victim.

During the short time we have taken to give this brief analysis of a situation too frequently existing, Rastignac lingered at the door.

"Well," he said at last, deciding to retire, "good-night, Augusta."

As he said the words, rather piteously, the door opened suddenly, and his wife, throwing herself into his arms, laid her head upon his shoulder sobbing.

The question was answered: Madame de Rastignac loved her husband; but for all that, the distant muttering of a subterranean fire might be heard beneath the flowers of their garden.

## III.

## A MINISTER'S MORNING.

THE next day, when Rastignac entered his office, the adjoining waiting-room was already occupied by eleven persons waiting with letters of introduction to solicit favors, also two peers of France and several deputies.

Presently a bell rang. The usher, with an eagerness which communicated itself to all present, entered the sanctum; an instant later he came out, bearing this stereotyped message: —

“The minister is obliged to attend a Council. He will, however, have the honor to receive the gentlemen of the two Chambers. As for the others, they can call again at another time.”

“What other time?” asked one of the postponed; “this is the third time in three days that I have come here uselessly.”

The usher made a gesture which meant, “It is not my affair; I follow my orders.” But hearing certain murmurs as to the *privilege* granted to honorable members, he said, with a certain solemnity, —

“The honorable gentlemen came to discuss affairs of public interest with his Excellency.”

The office-seekers, being compelled to accept this fib, departed. After which the bell rang again. The usher then assumed his most gracious expression of

face. By natural affinity, the lucky ones had gathered in a group at one end of the room. Though they had never seen one another before, most of them being the offspring of the late national lying-in, they seemed to recognize a certain representative air which is very difficult to define, though it can never be mistaken. The usher, not venturing to choose among so many eminent personages, turned a mute, caressing glance on all, as if to say, —

“Whom shall I have the honor of first announcing?”

“Gentlemen,” said Colonel Frauchessini, “I believe I have seen you all arrive.”

And he walked to the closed door, which the usher threw open, announcing in a loud, clear voice, —

“Monsieur le Colonel Franchessini!”

“Ha! so you are the first this morning,” said the minister, making a few steps towards the colonel, and giving him his hand. “What have you come for, my dear fellow? — a railroad, a canal, a suspension bridge?”

“I have come, my good-natured minister, on private business in which you are more interested than I.”

“That is not a judicious way of urging it, for I warn you I pay little or no attention to my own business.”

“I had a visit from Maxime this morning, on his return from Arcis-sur-Aube,” said the colonel, coming to the point. “He gave me all particulars of that election. He thinks a spoke might be put in the wheel of it. Now, if you have time to let me make a few explanations —”

The minister, who was sitting before his desk with his back to the fireplace, turned round to look at the clock.

“Look here, my dear fellow,” he said, “I’m afraid

you will be long, and I have a hungry pack outside there waiting for me. I should n't listen to you comfortably. Do me the favor to go and take a walk and come back at twelve o'clock to breakfast. I'll present you to Madame de Rastignac, whom you don't know, I think, and after breakfast we will take a few turns in the garden; then I can listen to you in peace."

"Very good, I accept that arrangement," said the colonel, rising.

As he crossed the waiting-room, he said, —

"Messieurs, I have not delayed you long, I hope."

Then, after distributing a few grasps of the hand, he departed.

Three hours later, when the colonel entered the salon where he was presented to Madame de Rastignac, he found there the Baron de Nucingen, who came nearly every day to breakfast with his son-in-law before the Bourse hour, Émile Blondet of the "*Débats*," Messieurs Moreau (de l'Oise), Dionis, and Camusot, three deputies madly loquacious, and two newly elected deputies whose names it is doubtful if Rastignac knew himself. Franchessini also recognized Martial de la Roche-Hugon, the minister's brother-in-law, and the inevitable des Lupeaulx, peer of France. As for another figure, who stood talking with the minister for some time in the recess of a window, the colonel learned, after inquiring of Émile Blondet, that it was that of a former functionary of the upper police, who continued, as an amateur, to do part of his former business, going daily to each minister under all administrations with as much zeal and regularity as if he were still charged with his official duties.

Madame de Rastignac seen at close quarters seemed to the colonel a handsome blonde, not at all languishing. She was strikingly like her mother, but with that shade of greater distinction which in the descendants of parvenus increases from generation to generation as they advance from their source. The last drop of the primitive Goriot blood had evaporated in this charming young woman, who was particularly remarkable for the high-bred delicacy of all her extremities, the absence of which in Madame de Nucingen had shown the daughter of Père Goriot.

As the colonel wished to retain a footing in the house he now entered for the first time, he talked about his wife.

"She lived," he said, "in the old English fashion, in her *home* ; but he should be most glad to bring her out of her retreat in order to present her to Madame de Rastignac, if the latter would graciously consent."

"Now," said the minister, dropping the arm of Émile Blondet, with whom he had been conversing, "let us go into the garden,"—adding, as soon as they were alone, "We want no ears about us in this matter."

"Maxime came to see me, as I told you," said the colonel, "on his return from Arcis-sur-Aube, and he is full of an idea of discovering something about the pretended parentage of this sculptor by which to oust him —"

"I know," interrupted Rastignac; "he spoke to me about that idea, and there's neither rhyme nor reason in it. Either this Salleneuve has some value, or he is a mere cipher. If the latter, it is useless

to employ such a dangerous instrument as the man Maxime proposes to neutralize a power that does not exist. If, on the other hand, this new deputy proves really an orator, we can deal with him in the tribune and in the newspapers without the help of such underground measures. General rule: in a land of unbridled publicity like ours, wherever the hand of the police appears, if even to lay bare the most shameful villany, there's always a hue and cry against the government. Public opinion behaves like the man to whom another man sang an air of Mozart to prove that Mozart was a great musician. Was he vanquished by evidence? 'Mozart,' he replied to the singer, 'may have been a great musician, but you, my dear fellow, have a cold in your head.'

"There's a great deal of truth in what you say," replied Franchessini; "but the man whom Maxime wants to unmask may be one of those honest mediocrities who make themselves a thorn in the side of all administrations; your most dangerous adversaries are not the giants of oratory."

"I expect to find out the real weight of the man before long," replied Rastignac, "from a source I have more confidence in than I have in Monsieur de Trailles. On this very occasion he has allowed himself to be tripped up, and now wants to compensate by heroic measures for his own lack of ability. As for your other man, I shall not employ him for the purpose Maxime suggests, but you may tell him from me —"

"Yes!" said Franchessini, with redoubled attention.

"— that if he meddles in politics, as he shows an



inclination to do, there are certain deplorable memories in his life — ”

“ But they are only memories now ; he has made himself a new skin.”

“ I know all about him,” replied Rastignac ; “ do you suppose there are no other detectives in Paris ? I know that since 1830, when he took Bibi-Lupin’s place as chief of the detective police, he has given his life a most respectably bourgeois character ; the only fault I find is that he overdoes it.”

“ And yet — ” said the colonel.

“ He is rich,” continued Rastignac, not heeding the interruption. “ His salary is twelve thousand francs, and he has the three hundred thousand Lucien de Rubempré left him, — also the proceeds of a manufactory of varnished leather which he started at Gentilly ; it pays him a large profit. His aunt, Jacqueline Collin, who lives with him, still does a shady business secretly, which of course brings in large fees, and I have the best of reasons for believing that they both gamble at the Bourse. He is so anxious to keep out of the mud that he has gone to the other extreme. Every evening he plays dominoes, like any bourgeois, in a café near the Prefecture, and Sundays he goes out to a little box of a place he has bought near the forest of Romainville, in the Saint-Gervais meadows ; there he cultivates blue dahlias, and talked, last year, of crowning a Rosière. All that, my dear colonel, is too bucolic to allow of my employing him on any political police-work.”

“ I think myself,” said Franchessini, “ that in order not to attract attention he rolls himself too much into a ball.”

“Make him unwind, and then, if he wants to return to active life and take a hand in politics, he may find some honest way of doing so. He’ll never make a Saint Vincent de Paul, — though the saint was at the galleys once upon a time; but there are plenty of ways in which he could get a third or fourth class reputation. If Monsieur de Saint-Estève, as he now calls himself, takes that course, and I am still in power, tell him to come and see me; I might employ him then.”

“That is something, certainly,” said Franchessini, aloud; but he thought to himself that since the days of the pension Vauquer the minister had taken long strides and that rôles had changed between himself and Vautrin.

“You can tell him what I say,” continued Rastignac, going up the steps of the portico, “but be cautious how you word it.”

“Don’t be uneasy,” replied the colonel. “I will speak to him judiciously, for he’s a man who must not be pushed too far; there are some old scores in life one can’t wipe out.”

The minister, by making no reply to this remark, seemed to admit the truth of it.

“You must be in the Chamber when the king opens it; we shall want all the enthusiasm we can muster,” said Rastignac to the colonel, as they parted.

The latter, when he took leave of Madame de Rastignac, asked on what day he might have the honor of presenting his wife.

“Why, any day,” replied the countess, “but particularly on Fridays.”

## IV.

## A CATECHISM.

RASTIGNAC called on Madame de l'Estorade the next day at the hour named to him by his wife. Like all those present at the scene produced by Monsieur de Ronquerolles, the minister had been struck by the emotion shown by the countess, and, without stopping to analyze the nature of the sentiment she might feel for the man who had saved her child, he was convinced of her serious interest in him.

By the suddenness and the masterly stroke of his election, Sallenauve had become an object of strong interest to the minister, — all the more because up to the last moment his candidacy was not seriously considered. It was now known that in the preparatory meeting he had given proofs of talent. To his active and dangerous party, which had but few representatives in the Chamber, he might become an organ that would echo far. By his peculiar position of birth and fortune, whatever might be the truth of it, he was one who could do without the favors of government; and all information obtained about him went to show that he was a man of grave character and opinions, who could not be turned from his chosen way.

On the other hand, the cloud upon his life might at a given moment serve to neutralize his honor; and

Rastignac, while rejecting the proposal of de Trailles and Franchessini to put the mystery into the hands of the police, did not himself renounce a means which, dangerous as it seemed to him, he might use if occasion warranted.

In this situation Madame de l'Estorade could be useful to him in two ways. Through her he could meet the new deputy accidentally, without appearing to seek him, and thus study him at his ease, in order to know if he had a vulnerable point accessible to persuasion. And, secondly, if he found him unpersuadable, he could let Madame de l'Estorade know in confidence of the secret inquiry about to be carried on into Sallenaue's antecedents, which, conveyed by her to the deputy, would have the effect of making him cautious and, consequently, less aggressive.

However, his immediate plan suffered some modification; for Madame de l'Estorade was not at home, and he was just leaving the house when Monsieur de l'Estorade returned on foot.

"My wife will be here soon," he said; "she has gone to Ville d'Avray with her daughter, and Monsieur and Madame Octave de Camps. Monsieur Marie-Gaston, one of our good friends, — you know, the charming poet who married Louise de Chaulieu, — has a country-house in that neighborhood, where his wife died. He returned there to-day for the first time since his misfortune; and these ladies have had the charity to meet him there, and so lessen the first shock of his recollections."

"I can therefore hardly hope to see her to-day; and it was to her, and not to you, my dear count, that

I came to offer my excuses for the scene of last night which seemed to annoy her much. Say to her, if you please, that I will take another opportunity of doing so. — By the bye," he added, "the election of your friend Sallenaue is making a devilish talk; the king spoke to me about it this morning, and I did not please him by repeating the favorable opinion you expressed of the new deputy last night."

"Well, but you know the tribune is a reef on which reputations are often wrecked. I am sorry you represented Sallenaue to the king as being on intimate terms with us. I have nothing to do with elections; but I may say that I did all I could to dissuade this objectionable candidate from presenting himself."

"Of course the king cannot blame you for merely knowing an Opposition deputy."

"No; but last night, in your salon, you seemed to imply that my wife was much interested in him. I did not wish to contradict you before witnesses; besides, really, one can't repudiate a man to whom we are under a great obligation. But my wife, ever since the day he was nominated, feels that our gratitude has become a burden. She was saying to me the other day that we had better let the acquaintance die out."

"Not, I hope, until you have done me a service by means of it," said Rastignac.

"At your orders, my dear minister, in all things."

"I want to meet this man and judge him for myself. To send him an invitation to dinner would be useless; under the eye of his party, he would not dare accept it, or if he did, he would be on his guard, and I should not see him as he is. But if I met him accidentally, I

should find him without armor, and I could feel for his vulnerable spots."

"To invite you both to dine with me might be open to the same objection; but I could, one of these evenings, make sure of a visit from him, and let you know — Stop!" cried Monsieur de l'Estorade; "a bright idea has come to me."

"If it is really bright," thought Rastignac, "it is fortunate I did not meet the wife."

"We are just about to give a children's ball, — a fancy of my little girl, to which Madame de l'Estorade, weary of refusing, has at last consented; the child wishes it to be given in celebration of her rescue. Of course, therefore, the rescuer is a necessary and integral part of the affair. Come to the ball, and I promise you noise enough to cover all investigations of your man; and certainly premeditation will never be suspected at such a meeting."

"You are too good," replied Rastignac, pressing the peer's hand affectionately. "Perhaps we had better say nothing about it to Madame de l'Estorade; a mere hint given to our man would put him on his guard, and I want to spring upon him suddenly, like a tiger on his prey."

"That's understood — complete surprise to everybody."

"Adieu, then," said Rastignac; "I shall make the king laugh to-morrow at the notion of children plotting politics."

"Ah!" replied Monsieur de l'Estorade, philosophically, "but isn't that how life itself is carried on? — great effects from little causes."

Rastignac had scarcely departed before Madame de l'Estorade returned with Naïs and Monsieur and Madame de Camps.

"My dear," said her husband, "you have just missed a charming visitor."

"Who was it?" asked the countess, indifferently.

"The minister of Public Works, who came to make you his excuses. He noticed with regret the disagreeable impression made upon you by the theories of that scamp de Ronquerolles."

"He has taken a good deal of trouble for a very small matter," said Madame de l'Estorade, not sharing her husband's enthusiasm.

"But all the same," he replied, "it was very gracious of him to think of your feelings." Then, in order to change the conversation, he asked Madame de Camps about their visit.

"Oh!" she replied, "the place is enchanting; you have no idea of its elegance and *comfort*."

"How about Gaston?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"He was, I won't say very calm," replied Madame de l'Estorade, "but at any rate master of himself. His condition satisfied me all the more because the day had begun by a serious annoyance to him."

"What was it?"

"Monsieur de Sallenaue could not come with him," replied Naïs, taking upon herself to reply.

She was one of those children brought up in a hot-house, who put themselves forward much oftener than they ought to do.

"Naïs," said Madame de l'Estorade, "go to Mary and tell her to do up your hair."

The child understood perfectly well that she was sent away for speaking improperly, and she made a face as she left the room.

"This morning," said Madame de l'Estorade as soon as Naïs had shut the door, "Monsieur Gaston and Monsieur de Sallenaue were to start together for Ville d'Avray, and meet us there, as agreed upon. But last night they had a visit from that organist who took such an active part in the election. He came to hear the Italian housekeeper sing and judge if she were ready to go upon the stage."

"Yes, yes," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "of course Sallenaue wants to get rid of her now that he has ceased to make statues."

"Just so," replied Madame de l'Estorade, with a slight tone of asperity. "In order to put a stop to all calumny Monsieur de Sallenaue wishes her to carry out her idea of going on the stage; but he wanted, in the first place, an opinion he could trust. Monsieur Gaston and Monsieur de Sallenaue accompanied the organist to Saint-Sulpice, where, during the services of the Month of Mary, the Italian woman sings every evening. After hearing her, the organist said she had a fine contralto that was worth, at the lowest, sixty thousand francs a year."

"Just the revenue of my iron-works," remarked Monsieur de Camps.

"That evening," continued Madame de l'Estorade, "Monsieur de Sallenaue told his housekeeper the opinion given of her talent, and with great kindness and delicacy let her know that she must now carry out her intention of supporting herself in that way. 'Yes,'



she replied, "I think the time has come. We will talk of it later;" and she stopped the conversation. This morning when the breakfast hour came, there was no sign of her. Thinking she must be ill, Monsieur de Sallenaue sent an old charwoman who does the rough work of the house to her room. No answer. Much disturbed, Monsieur Gaston and Monsieur de Sallenaue went themselves to see what it meant. After knocking and calling in vain, they determined to open the door, the key of which was outside. In the room no housekeeper! but in place of her a letter addressed to Monsieur de Sallenaue, in which she said that finding herself an embarrassment to him, she had retired to the house of one of her friends, thanking him for all his goodness to her."

"The bird has found its wings," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "and takes flight."

"That is not Monsieur de Sallenaue's idea," replied the countess; "he does not believe in such ingratitude. He is confident that, feeling herself a burden to him and yielding to the desperation which is natural to her, she felt obliged to leave his house without giving him a chance in any manner to provide for her future."

"A good riddance!" remarked Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"Neither Monsieur de Sallenaue nor Monsieur Gaston takes that stoical view of it. In view of the headstrong nature of the woman, they fear some violence to herself, which, as we know, she once attempted. Or else they dread some evil adviser. The charwoman states that two or three visits have been lately

made at the house by a lady of middle age, richly dressed, in a carriage, whose manner was singular, and who seemed to desire secrecy in speaking with Luigia."

"Some charitable woman, of course," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "the runaway is given to piety."

"At any rate the truth must be discovered, and it was that which kept Monsieur de Sallenaue from accompanying Monsieur Gaston to Ville d'Avray."

"Well," remarked Monsieur de l'Estorade, "in spite of their respective virtue, it is my opinion he holds by her."

"In any case," returned Madame de l'Estorade, emphasizing the word, "she does not *hold* by him."

"I don't agree with you," said Madame de Camps; "to avoid a man is often the greatest proof of love."

Madame de l'Estorade looked at her friend with a vexed air, and a slight tinge of color came into her cheeks. But no one took notice of it, for at this moment the servant threw open the door and announced dinner.

After dinner, the theatre was proposed; that is one of the amusements that Parisians miss the most in the provinces. Monsieur Octave de Camps, coming from his "villanous iron-works," as Madame de l'Estorade called them, had arrived in Paris eager for this pleasure, which his wife, more serious and sober, did not enjoy to the same extent. Therefore, when Monsieur de Camps proposed going to the Porte-Saint-Martin to see a fairy piece then much in vogue, Madame Octave replied:—

"Neither Madame de l'Estorade nor I have the least desire to go out this evening; we are very tired with

our expedition. Take René and Naïs ; they will enjoy the fairies far more than we."

The two children awaited in deep anxiety the permission which Madame de l'Estorade finally granted ; and a few moments later the two friends, left to themselves, prepared for an evening of comfortable talk.

"I am not at home to any one," said Madame de l'Estorade to Lucas, as soon as her family had departed.

"Now that we are alone," said Madame de Camps, "I shall proceed to blows ; I have not travelled two hundred miles to wrap up in cotton-wool the truth I have come to tell you."

"Ready to hear it," said Madame de l'Estorade, laughing.

"Your last letter, my dear, simply frightened me."

"Why ? Because I told you I was trying to keep a man at a distance ?"

"Yes. Why keep him at a distance ? If Monsieur de Camps or Monsieur Gaston or Monsieur de Rastignac were to make a practice of coming here habitually, would you trouble yourself about them ?"

"No ; but they have not the same claim upon me : it is that I fear."

"Tell me, do you think Monsieur de Sallenaue loves you ?"

"No ; I am now quite sure to the contrary ; and I also think that on my side —"

"We'll talk about that presently ; now I want to ask if you desire Monsieur de Sallenaue to love you ?"

"Heaven forbid !"

"Well, then, the best possible way to make him do

so is to wound his self-love, and show yourself unjust and ungrateful to him; you will only force him to think the more of you."

"But, my dear friend, is n't that a very far-fetched observation?"

"Did you never observe that men are more taken by our snubs than our caresses? Severity fixes their attention upon us."

"If that were so, all the men we disdain and never think of would sigh for us."

"Oh! my dear, don't make me talk such nonsense. To take fire, a man must have some degree of combustibility; and if that *other* person is lost to him forever, why should n't he, as you said yourself, ricochet upon you?"

"That other person is not lost to him; he expects, more than ever, to find her by the help of a very clever seeker, the mother-superior of a convent at Arcis."

"Very good; then why employ the delay in holding him at arm's-length, — a proceeding which will only draw him towards you?"

"My dear moralist, I don't admit your theory in the least. As for Monsieur de Sallenaue, he will be much too busy with his duties in the Chamber to think of me. Besides, he is a man who is full of self-respect; he will be mortified by my manner, which will seem to him both ungrateful and unjust. If I try to put two feet of distance between us, he will put four; you may rely on that."

"And *you*, my dear?" asked Madame de Camps.

"How do you mean? — I?"

"You who are not busy, who have no Chamber to occupy your mind; you who have, I will agree, a great deal of self-respect, but who know as little about the things of the heart as the veriest school-girl, — what will become of you under the dangerous system you are imposing upon yourself?"

"If I don't love him when near, I shall certainly love him still less at a distance."

"So that when you see him take his ostracism coolly, your self-love as a woman will not be piqued."

"Certainly not; that is precisely the result I desire."

"And if you find, on the contrary, that he complains of you, or if he does not complain, that he suffers from your treatment, will your conscience tell you absolutely nothing?"

"It will tell me that I am doing right, and that I could not do otherwise."

"And if success attends him and fame with its hundred voices talks of him, how will you think of him?"

"As I think of Monsieur Thiers and Monsieur Berryer."

"And Naïs, who adores him and will probably say, the first time he dines with you, 'Ah! mamma, how well he talks!' —"

"If you are going to argue on the chatter of a child —"

"And Monsieur de l'Estorade, who already irritates you? He is beginning to-day to sacrifice him to the spirit of party; shall you silence him every time he makes some malevolent insinuation about Monsieur de

Sallenaue, and denies his honor and his talent? — you know the judgment people make on those who do not think as we do.”

“In short,” said Madame de l’Estorade, “you are trying to make me admit that the surest way to think of a person is to put him out of sight.”

“Listen to me, my dear,” said Madame de Camps, with a slight touch of gravity. “I have read and re-read your letters. You were there your own self, more natural and less quibbling than you are now, and an impression has remained upon my mind: it is that Monsieur de Sallenaue has touched your heart, though he may not have entered it.”

Madame de l’Estorade made a gesture of denial, but the confessor went on: —

“I know that idea provokes you; you can’t very well admit to me what you have studiously denied to yourself. But what is, is. We don’t say of a man, ‘A sort of magnetism issues from him, one feels his eye without meeting it;’ we don’t cry out, ‘I am invulnerable on the side of love,’ without having had some prickings of it.”

“But so many things have happened since I wrote that nonsense.”

“True, he was only a sculptor then, and before long he may be a minister, — not like Monsieur de Rastignac, but like our great poet, Canalis.”

“I like sermons with definite deductions,” said Madame de l’Estorade, with a touch of impatience.

“That is what Vergniaud said to Robespierre on the 31st of May, and I reply, with Robespierre, Yes, I’ll draw my conclusion; and it is against your self-

confidence as a woman, who, having reached the age of thirty-two without a suspicion of what love is, cannot admit that at this late date she may be subjected to the common law."

"But what I want is a practical conclusion," said Madame de l'Estorade, tapping her foot.

"My practical conclusion, — here it is," replied Madame Octave. "If you will not persist in the folly of swimming against the current, I see no danger whatever in your being submerged. You are strong; you have principles and religion; you adore your children; you love Monsieur de l'Estorade, their father, in them. With all that ballast you cannot sink."

"Well?" said Madame de l'Estorade, interrogatively.

"Well, there is no need to have recourse to violent measures, the success of which is very problematical. Remain as you are; build no barricades when no one attacks you. Don't excite tempests of heart and conscience merely to pacify your conscience and quiet your heart, now ruffled only by a tiny breeze. No doubt between a man and a woman the sentiment of friendship does take something of the character ordinarily given to love; but such friendship is neither an impossible illusion nor is it a yawning gulf."

"Then," said Madame de l'Estorade, with a thoughtful air, "do you wish me to make a friend of Monsieur de Salleneuve?"

"Yes, dear, in order not to make him a fixed idea, a regret, a struggle, — three things which poison life."

"But my husband, who has already had a touch of jealousy?"

“As for your husband, I find him somewhat changed, and not for the better. I miss that deference he always showed to you personally, to your ideas and impressions, — a deference which honored him more than he thought, because there is true greatness in the power to admire. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that public life is spoiling him a little. As you cannot be with him in the Chamber of peers, he is beginning to suspect that he can have a life without you. If I were you, I should watch these symptoms of independence, and not let the work of your lifetime come to nought.”

“Do you know, my dear,” said Madame de l’Estorade, laughing, “that you are giving me advice that may end in fire and slaughter?”

“Not at all. I am a woman forty-five years of age, who has always seen things on their practical side. I did not marry my husband, whom I loved, until I had convinced myself, by putting him to the test, that he was worthy of my esteem. I don’t make life; I take it as it comes, — trying to put order and *possibility* into all the occurrences it brings to me. I am neither the frenzied passion of Louise de Chaulieu, nor the insensible reason of Renée de Maucombe. I am a Jesuit in petticoats, persuaded that rather wide sleeves are better than sleeves that are tight to the wrist; and I have never gone in search of the philosopher’s stone —”

At this instant Lucas opened the door of the salon and announced, —

“Monsieur le Comte de Salleneuve.”

His mistress gave him a look inquiring why he had disobeyed her orders, to which Lucas replied by a sign



*“ His Mistress gave him a look inquiring why he had  
disobeyed her orders.”*







implying that he did not suppose the prohibition applied in this instance.

Madame de Camps, who had never yet seen the new deputy, now gave her closest attention to a study of him.

Sallenaue explained his visit by his great desire to know how matters had gone at Ville d'Avray, and whether Marie-Gaston had been deeply affected by his return there. As for the business which detained him in Paris, he said he had so far met with no success. He had seen the prefect of police, who had given him a letter to Monsieur de Saint-Estève, the chief of the detective police. Aware of the antecedents of that man, Monsieur de Sallenaue expressed himself as much surprised to find a functionary with extremely good manners and bearing; but he held out faint hopes of success. "A woman hiding in Paris," he said, "is an eel in its safest hole." He (Sallenaue) should continue the search the next day with the help of Jacques Bricheteau; but if nothing came of it, he should go in the evening to Ville d'Avray, for he did not, he said, share Madame de l'Estorade's security as to Gaston's state of mind.

As he was taking leave, Madame de l'Estorade said to him, —

"Do not forget Naïs' ball which takes place the day after to-morrow. You will affront her mortally if you fail to be present. Try to bring Monsieur Gaston with you. It might divert his mind a little."

## V.

## CHILDREN.

ON his return from the theatre Monsieur Octave de Camps declared that it would be long before they caught him at a *fairy* piece again. But Naïs, on the contrary, under the spell of its marvels gave a lively recital of the scene, which showed how much her imagination was capable of being stirred.

As Madame de Camps and her husband walked away together, the former remarked, —

“That child is really very disquieting. Madame de l’Estorade develops her too much; I should not be surprised if she gave her a great deal of trouble in future years.”

It would be difficult to mark the precise moment in our contemporary habits and customs when a new species of religion, which might be called child-idolatry, appeared. Nor shall we find it easier to discover by what species of influence this worship has reached its present enormous development among us. But, although unexplained, the fact exists and ought to be recorded by every faithful historian of the great and the little movements of society. In the family of to-day children have taken the place of the household gods of the ancients, and whoever does not share this worship is not a morose and sour spirit, nor a captious and annoying reasoner, — he is simply an atheist.

Try to amuse one of these beloved adored ones, all puffed up, as they naturally are, by a sense of their importance, with dolls and toys and Punch-and-Judys, as in the days of our unsophisticated innocence! Nonsense! Boys must have ponies and cigarettes, and the reading of novelettes; and girls, the delight of playing hostess, giving afternoon dances, and evening parties at which the real Guignol of the Champs Élysées and Robert Houdin appear, — the entertainment being announced on the invitation cards. Sometimes, as now in the case of Naïs de l'Estorade, these little sovereigns obtain permission to give a ball in *grown-up* style, — so much so, that policemen are stationed about the doors, and Delisle, Nattier, and Prévost provide the toilets and the decorations.

With the character we have already seen in Naïs, it may be said that no one was better fitted than she for the duties that devolved upon her by the abdication of her mother. This abdication took place before the evening of the ball itself, for it was Mademoiselle Naïs de l'Estorade who, in her own name, invited her guests to do her the honor to pass the evening *chez elle*; and as Madame de l'Estorade would not allow the parody to go so far as printed cards, Naïs spent several days in writing her notes of invitation, taking care to put in the corner, in conspicuous letters, the sacramental word, "Dancing."

Nothing could be more curious, or, as Madame de Camps might have said, more alarming, than the self-possession of this little girl of fourteen, behaving precisely as she had seen her mother do on like occasions; stationed, to receive her company, at the door of the

salon, and marking by her manner the proper grades of welcome, from eager cordiality to a coldness that verged on disdain. To her best friends she gave her hand in truly English style; for the rest she had smiles, apportioned to the degrees of intimacy, — simple inclinations of the head for unknown guests or those of less account; with little speeches now and then, and delicious mamma-like airs for the tiny children whom it is necessary to ask to these juvenile routs, however dangerous and difficult to manage that element may be.

With the fathers and mothers of her guests, as the ball was not given for them, Naïs as a general thing reversed the nature of the Gospel invocation, *Sinite parvulos venire ad me*, and was careful not to pass the limit of cold though respectful politeness. But when Lucas, following the instructions he had received, reversed the natural order of things and announced, “Mesdemoiselles de la Roche-Hugon, Madame la Baronne de la Roche-Hugon, and Madame la Comtesse de Rastignac, the little strategist laid aside her reserve, and, running up to the wife of the minister, she took her hand and pressed it to her lips with charming grace.

After the dancing began, Naïs was unable to accept all the invitations which the elegant young lions vied with one another in pressing upon her; in fact, she grew sadly confused as to the number and order of her engagements, — a circumstance which very nearly led, in spite of the *entente cordiale*, to an open rupture between France and perfidious Albion. A quadrille doubly promised, to a young English peer aged ten and a pupil



in the Naval School of about the same years, came very near producing unpleasant complications, inasmuch as the young British scion of nobility had assumed a boxing attitude. That fray pacified, another annoying episode occurred. A small boy, seeing a servant with a tray of refreshments and being unable to reach up to the objects of his greed, had the deplorable idea of putting his hand on the edge of the tray and bending it down to him. Result: a cascade of mingled orgeat, negus, and syrups; and happy would it have been had the young author of this mischief been the only sufferer from the sugary torrent; but, alas! nearly a dozen innocent victims were splashed and spattered by the disastrous accident, — among them four or five bacchantes, who were furious at seeing their toilets injured, and would fain have made an Orpheus of the clumsy infant. While he was being rescued with great difficulty from their clutches by the German governess, a voice was heard amid the hubbub, — that of a pretty little blonde, saying to a small Scotch youth with whom she had danced the whole evening, —

“How odd of Naïs to invite little boys of that age!”

“That’s easily explained,” said the Scottish youth; “he’s a boy of the Treasury department. Naïs had to ask him on account of her parents, — a matter of policy, you know.”

Then, taking the arm of one of his friends, the same youth continued: —

“Hey, Ernest,” he said, “I’d like a cigar; suppose we find a quiet corner, out of the way of all this racket?”

“I can’t, my dear fellow,” replied Ernest, in a

whisper; "you know Léontine always makes me a scene when she smells I've been smoking, and she is charming to me to-night. See, look at what she has given me!"

"A horse-hair ring!" exclaimed Ernest, disdainfully, "with two locked hearts; all the boys at school have them."

"What have you to show that's better?" replied Ernest, in a piqued tone.

"Oh!" said the Scotchman, with a superior air, "something much better."

And drawing from the pouch which formed an integral part of his costume a note on violet paper highly perfumed, —

"There," he said, putting it under Ernest's nose, "smell that!"

Indelicate friend that he was, Ernest pounced upon the note and took possession of it. The Scotch youth, furious, flung himself upon the treacherous French boy; on which Monsieur de l'Estorade, a thousand leagues from imagining the subject of the quarrel, intervened and parted the combatants, which enabled the ravisher to escape into a corner of the salon to enjoy his booty. The note contained no writing. The young scamp had probably taken the paper out of his mother's blotting-book. A moment after, returning to his adversary and giving him the note, he said in a jeering tone, —

"There's your note; it is awfully compromising."

"Keep it, monsieur," replied the Scotchman. "I shall ask for it to-morrow in the Tuileries, under the horse-chestnuts; meantime, you will please understand that all intercourse is at an end between us."

Ernest was less knightly; he contented himself with putting the thumb of his right hand to his nose and spreading the fingers, — an ironical gesture he had acquired from his mother's coachman; after which he ran to find his partner for the next quadrille.

But what details are these on which we are wasting time, when we know that interests of the highest order are moving, subterraneously, beneath the surface of the children's ball.

Arriving from Ville d'Avray late in the afternoon, Sallenaue had brought Madame de l'Estorade ill news of Marie-Gaston. Under an appearance of resignation, he was gloomy, and, singular to say, he had not visited the grave of his wife, — as if he feared an emotion he might not have the power to master. It seemed to Sallenaue that his friend had come to the end of his strength, and that a mental prostration of the worst character was succeeding the over-excitement he had shown at the election. One thing reassured the new deputy, and enabled him to come to Paris for, at any rate, a few hours. A friend of Marie-Gaston, an English nobleman with whom he had been intimate in Florence, came out to see him, and the sad man greeted the new-comer with apparent joy.

In order to distract Sallenaue's thoughts from this anxiety, Madame de l'Estorade introduced him to Monsieur Octave de Camps, the latter having expressed a great desire to know him. The deputy had not talked ten minutes with the iron-master before he reached his heart by the magnitude of the metallurgical knowledge his conversation indicated.

During the year in which he had been preparing for

a parliamentary life, Sallenaue had busied himself by acquiring the practical knowledge which enables an orator of the Chamber to take part in all discussions and have reasons to give for his general views. He had turned his attention more especially to matters connected with the great question of the revenue and taxation: such, for instance, as the custom-house, laws of exchange, stamp duties, and taxation, direct and indirect. Approaching in this manner that problematical science — which is, nevertheless, so sure of itself! — called political economy, Sallenaue had also studied the sources which contribute to form the great current of national prosperity; and in this connection the subject of mines, the topic at this moment most interesting to Monsieur de Camps, had not been neglected by him. We can imagine the admiration of the iron-master, who had studied too exclusively the subject of iron ore to know much about the other branches of metallurgy, when the young deputy told him, apropos of the wealth of our soil, a sort of Arabian-Nights tale, which, if science would only take hold of it, might become a reality.

“But, monsieur, do you really believe,” cried Monsieur de Camps, “that, besides our coal and iron mines, we possess mines of copper, lead, and, possibly, silver?”

“If you will take the trouble to consult certain specialists,” replied Sallenaue, “you will find that neither the boasted strata of Bohemia and Saxony nor even those of Russia and Hungary can be compared to those hidden in the Pyrenees, in the Alps from Briançon to the Isère, in the Cévennes on the Lozère side,

in the Puy-de-Dôme, Bretagne, and the Vosges. In the Vosges, more especially about the town of Saint-Dié, I can point out to you a single vein of the mineral of silver which lies to the depth of fifty to eighty metres with a length of thirteen kilometres."

"But, monsieur, why has such untold metallurgical wealth never been worked?"

"It has been, in former days," replied Sallenaue, "especially during the Roman occupation of Gaul. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the work was abandoned; but the lords of the soil and the clergy renewed it in the middle ages; after that, during the struggle of feudality against the royal power and the long civil wars which devastated France, the work was again suspended, and has never since been taken up."

"Are you sure of what you say?"

"Ancient authors, Strabo and others, all mention these mines, and the tradition of their existence still lingers in the regions where they are situated; decrees of emperors and the ordinances of certain of our kings bear testimony to the value of their products; in certain places more material proof may be found in excavations of considerable depth and length, in galleries and halls cut in the solid rock, — in short, in the many traces still existing of those vast works which have immortalized Roman industry. To this must be added that the modern study of geological science has confirmed and developed these irrefutable indications."

The imagination of Monsieur Octave de Camps, hitherto limited to the development of a single iron-mine, took fire, and he was about to ask his instructor to give him his ideas on the manner of awakening a

practical interest in the matter, when Lucas, throwing wide open the double doors of the salon, announced in his loudest and most pompous voice, —

“Monsieur the minister of Public Works.”

The effect produced on the elders of the assembly was electric.

“I want to see what sort of figure that little Rastignac cuts as a statesman,” said Monsieur de Camps, rising from his seat; but in his heart he was thinking of the government subsidy he wanted for his iron-mine. The new deputy, on his side, foresaw an inevitable meeting with the minister, and wondered what his friends in the Opposition would say when they read in the “National” that a representative of the Left was seen to have an interview with a minister celebrated for his art in converting political opponents. Anxious also to return to Marie-Gaston, he resolved to profit by the general stir created by the minister’s arrival to slip away; and by a masterly manoeuvre he made his way slyly to the door of the salon, expecting to escape without being seen. But he reckoned without Naïs, to whom he was engaged for a quadrille. That small girl sounded the alarm at the moment when he laid his hand on the handle of the door; and Monsieur de l’Estorade, mindful of his promise to Rastignac, hastened to put a stop to the desertion. Finding his quiet retreat impossible, Sallenuve was afraid that an open departure after the arrival of the minister might be construed as an act of puritanical opposition in the worst taste; he therefore accepted the situation promptly, and decided to remain.

Monsieur de l’Estorade knew that Sallenuve was

far too wise to be the dupe of any artifices he might have used to bring about his introduction to the minister. He therefore went straight to the point, and soon after Rastignac's arrival he slipped his arm through that of the statesman, and, approaching the deputy, said to him, —

“Monsieur the minister of Public Works, who, on the eve of the battle, wishes me to introduce him to a general of the enemy's army.”

“Monsieur le ministre does me too much honor,” replied Sallenaue, ceremoniously. “Far from being a general, I am a private soldier, and a very unknown one.”

“Hum!” said the minister; “it seems to me that the battle at Arcis-sur-Aube was not an insignificant victory; you routed our ranks, monsieur, in a singular manner.”

“There was nothing wonderful in that; you must have heard that a saint fought for us.”

“Well, at any rate,” said Rastignac, “I prefer this result to the one arranged for us by a man I thought cleverer than he proved to be, whom I sent down there. It seems that Beauvisage is a perfect nonentity; he'd have rubbed off upon us; and after all, he was really as much Left centre as the other man, Giguët. Now the Left centre is our real enemy, because it is aiming to get our portfolios.”

“Oh!” said Monsieur de l'Estorade, “after what we heard of the man, I think he would have done exactly what was wanted of him.”

“My dear friend, don't believe that,” said the minister. “Fools are often more tenacious of the flag

under which they enlisted than we think for. Besides, to go over to the enemy is to make a choice, and that supposes an operation of the mind ; it is much easier to be obstinate."

"I agree with the minister," said Sallenaue ; " extreme innocence and extreme rascality are equally able to defend themselves against seduction."

Here Monsieur de l'Estorade, seeing, or pretending to see, a signal made to him, looked over his shoulder and said, —

"I'm coming."

And the two adversaries being thus buckled together, he hastened away as if summoned to some duty as master of the house.

Sallenaue was anxious not to seem disturbed at finding himself alone with the minister. The meeting having come about, he decided to endure it with a good grace, and, taking the first word, he asked if the ministry had prepared, in view of the coming sessions, a large number of bills.

"No, very few," replied Rastignac. "To tell the truth, we do not expect to be in power very long ; we brought about an election because in the general confusion into which the press has thrown public opinion, our constitutional duty was to force that opinion to reconstitute itself ; but the fact is, we did not expect the result would be favorable to us, and we are therefore taken somewhat unawares."

"You are like the peasant," said Sallenaue, laughing, "who, expecting the end of the world, did not sow his wheat."

"Well, we don't look upon our retirement as the



end of the world," said Rastignac, modestly; "there are men to come after us, and many of them well able to govern; only, as we expected to give but few more representations in that transitory abode called 'power,' we have not unpacked either our costumes or our scenery. Besides, the coming session, in any case, can only be a business session. The question now is, of course, between the palace, that is, personal influence, and the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy. This question will naturally come up when the vote is taken on the secret-service fund. Whenever, in one way or the other, that is settled, and the budget is voted, together with a few bills of secondary interest, Parliament has really completed its task; it will have put an end to a distressing struggle, and the country will know to which of the two parties it can look for the development of its prosperity."

"And you think," said Sallenauve, "that in a well-balanced system of government that question is a useful one to raise?"

"Well," replied Rastignac, "we have not raised it. It is born perhaps of circumstances; a great deal, as I think, from the restlessness of certain ambitions, and also from the tactics of parties."

"So that, in your opinion, one of the combatants is not guilty and has absolutely nothing to reproach himself with?"

"You are a republican," said Rastignac, "and therefore, *a priori*, an enemy to the dynasty. I think I should lose my time in trying to change your ideas on the policy you complain of."

"You are mistaken," said the theoretical republican

deputy; "I have no preconceived hatred to the reigning dynasty. I even think that in its past, *striped*, if I may say so, with royal affinities and revolutionary memories, it has all that is needed to respond to the liberal and monarchical instincts of the nation. But you will find it difficult to persuade me that in the present head of the dynasty we shall not find extreme ideas of personal influence, which in the long run will undermine and subvert the finest as well as the strongest institutions."

"Yes," said Rastignac, ironically, "and they are saved by the famous axiom of the deputy of Sancerre: 'The king reigns, but does not govern.'"

Whether he was tired of standing to converse, or whether he wished to prove his ease in releasing himself from the trap which had evidently been laid for him, Sallenuve, before replying, drew up a chair for his interlocutor, and, taking one himself, said, —

"Will you permit me to cite the example of another royal behavior? — that of a prince who was not considered indifferent to his royal prerogative, and who was not ignorant of constitutional mechanism —"

"Louis XVIII.," said Rastignac, "or, as the newspapers used to call him, 'the illustrious author of the Charter'?"

"Precisely; and will you kindly tell me where he died?"

"*Parbleu!* at the Tuileries."

"And his successor?"

"In exile — Oh! I see what you are coming to."

"My conclusion is certainly not difficult to guess. But have you fully remarked the deduction to be

drawn from that royal career? — for which I myself feel the greatest respect. Louis XVIII. was not a citizen king. He granted his Charter, but he never consented to it. Born nearer to the throne than the prince whose regrettable tendencies I mentioned just now, he might naturally share more deeply still the ideas, the prejudices, and the infatuations of the court; in person he was ridiculous (a serious princely defect in France); he bore the brunt of a new and untried régime; he succeeded a government which had intoxicated the people with that splendid gilded smoke called glory; and if he was not actually brought back to France by foreigners, at any rate he came as the result of the armed invasion of Europe. Now, shall I tell you why, in spite of all these defects and disadvantages, in spite, too, of the ceaseless conspiracy kept up against his government, it was given to him to die tranquilly in his bed at the Tuileries?"

"Because he had made himself a constitutional king," said Rastignac, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "But do you mean to say that we are not that?"

"In the letter, yes; in the spirit, no. When Louis XVIII. gave his confidence to a minister, he gave it sincerely and wholly. He did not cheat him; he played honestly into his hand, — witness the famous ordinance of September 5, and the dissolution of the Chamber, which was more Royalist than himself, — a thing he had the wisdom not to desire. Later, a movement of public opinion shook the minister who had led him along that path; that minister was his favorite, his son, as he called him. No matter; yielding to the constitutional necessity, he bravely sent him to foreign

parts, after loading him with crosses and titles, — in short, with everything that could soften the pain of his fall; and he did not watch and manœuvre surreptitiously to bring him back to power, which that minister never regained.”

“For a man who declares he does not hate us,” said Rastignac, “you treat us rather roughly. According to you we are almost faithless to the constitutional compact, and our policy, to your thinking ambiguous and tortuous, gives us a certain distant likeness to Monsieur Doublemain in the ‘*Mariage de Figaro*.’”

“I do not say that the evil is as deep as that,” replied Sallenuve; “perhaps, after all, *we* are simply a *faiseur*, — using the word, be it understood, in the sense of a meddler, one who wants to have his finger in everything.”

“Ah! monsieur, but suppose we are the ablest politician in the country.”

“If we are, it does not follow that our kingdom ought not to have the chance of becoming as able as ourselves.”

“*Parbleu!*” cried Rastignac, in the tone of a man who comes to the climax of a conversation, “I wish I had power to realize a wish —”

“And that is?”

“To see you grappling with that ability which you call meddlesome.”

“Well, you know, Monsieur le ministre, that we all spend three fourths of life in wishing for the impossible.”

“Why impossible? Would you be the first man of the Opposition to be seen at the Tuileries? An invi-

tation to dinner given publicly, openly, which would, by bringing you into contact with one whom you misjudge at a distance — ”

“ I should have the honor to refuse.”

And he emphasized the words *have the honor* in a way to show the meaning he attached to them.

“ You are all alike, you men of the Opposition ! ” cried the minister ; “ you won’t let yourselves be enlightened when the opportunity presents itself ; or, to put it better, you — ”

“ Do you call the rays from those gigantic red bottles in a chemist’s shop *light*, when they flash into your eyes as you pass them after dark ? Don’t they, on the contrary, seem to blind you ? ”

“ It is not our rays that frighten you,” said Rastignac ; “ it is the dark lantern of your party watchmen on their rounds.”

“ There may be some truth in what you say ; a party and the man who undertakes to represent it are in some degree a married couple, who in order to live peaceably together must be mutually courteous, frank, and faithful in heart as well as in principle.”

“ Well, try to be moderate. Your dream is far more impossible to realize than mine ; the day will come when you will have more to say about the courtesy of your chaste better half.”

“ If there is an evil for which I ought to be prepared, it is that.”

“ Do you think so ? With the lofty and generous sentiments so apparent in your nature, shall you remain impassive under political attack, — under calumny, for instance ? ”

“ You yourself, Monsieur le ministre, have not escaped its venom ; but it did not, I think, deter you from your course.”

“ But,” said Rastignac, lowering his voice, “ suppose I were to tell you that I have already sternly refused to listen to a proposal to search into your private life on a certain side which, being more in the shade than the rest, seems to offer your enemies a chance to entrap you.”

“ I do not thank you for the honor you have done yourself in rejecting with contempt the proposals of men who can be neither of my party nor of yours ; they belong to the party of base appetites and selfish passions. But, supposing the impossible, had they found some acceptance from you, pray believe that my course, which follows the dictates of my conscience, could not be affected thereby.”

“ But your party, — consider for a moment its elements : a jumble of foiled ambitions, brutal greed, plagiarists of '93, despots disguising themselves as lovers of liberty.”

“ My party has nothing, and seeks to gain something. Yours calls itself conservative, and it is right ; its chief concern is how to preserve its power, offices, and wealth, — in short, all it now monopolizes.”

“ But, monsieur, we are not a closed way ; we open our way, on the contrary, to all ambitions. But the higher you are in character and intellect, the less we can allow you to pass, dragging after you your train of democrats ; for the day when that crew gains the upper hand it will not be a change of policy, but a revolution.”

“But what makes you think I want an opening of any kind?”

“What! follow a course without an aim? — a course that leads nowhere? A certain development of a man’s faculties not only gives him the right but makes it his duty to seek to govern.”

“To watch the governing power is a useful career, and, I may add, a very busy one.”

“You can fancy, monsieur,” said Rastignac, good-humoredly, “that if Beauvisage were in your place I should not have taken the trouble to argue with him; I may say, however, that he would have made my effort less difficult.”

“This meeting, which *chance* has brought about between us,” said Sallenaue, “will have one beneficial result; we understand each other henceforth, and our future meetings will always therefore be courteous — which will not lessen the strength of our convictions.”

“Then I must say to the king — for I had his royal commands to —”

Rastignac did not end the sentence in which he was, so to speak, firing his last gun, for the orchestra began to play a quadrille, and Naïs, running up, made him a coquettish courtesy, saying, —

“Monsieur le ministre, I am very sorry, but you have taken my partner, and you must give him up. He is down for my eleventh quadrille, and if I miss it my list gets into terrible confusion.”

“You permit me, monsieur?” said Sallenaue, laughing. “As you see, I am not a very savage republican.” So saying, he followed Naïs, who led him along by the hand.

Madame de l'Estorade, comprehending that this fancy of Naïs was rather compromising to the dignity of the new deputy, had arranged that several papas and mammas should figure in the same quadrille; and she herself with the Scotch lad danced *vis-à-vis* to her daughter, who beamed with pride and joy. In the evolutions of the last figure, where Naïs had to take her mother's hand, she said, pressing it passionately, —

“Poor mamma! if it had n't been for *him*, you would n't have me now.”

This sudden reminder so agitated Madame de l'Estorade, coming as it did unexpectedly, that she was seized with a return of the nervous trembling her daughter's danger had originally caused, and was forced to sit down. Seeing her change color, Salleneuve, Naïs, and Madame Octave de Camps ran to her to know if she were ill.

“It is nothing,” she answered, addressing Salleneuve; “only that my little girl reminded me suddenly of the immense obligation we are under to you, monsieur. ‘Without *him*,’ she said, ‘you would not have me.’ Ah! monsieur, without your generous courage where would my child be now?”

“Come, come, don't excite yourself,” interposed Madame Octave de Camps, observing the convulsive and almost gasping tone of her friend's voice. “It is not reasonable to put yourself in such a state for a child's speech.”

“She is better than the rest of us,” replied Madame de l'Estorade, taking Naïs in her arms.

“Come, mamma, be reasonable,” said that young lady.



“She puts nothing in the world,” continued Madame de l’Estorade, “before her gratitude to her preserver; whereas her father and I have scarcely shown him any.”

“But, madame,” said Sallenuve, “you have courteously —”

“Courteously!” interrupted Naïs, shaking her pretty head with an air of disapproval; “if any one had saved my daughter, I should be different to him from that.”

“Naïs,” said Madame de Camps, sternly, “children should be silent when their opinion is not asked.”

“What is the matter?” said Monsieur de l’Estorade, joining the group.

“Nothing,” said Madame de Camps; “only a giddiness Renée had in dancing.”

“Is it over?”

“Yes, I am quite well again,” said Madame de l’Estorade.

“Then come and say good-night to Madame de Rastignac, who is preparing to take leave.”

In his eagerness to get to the minister’s wife, he forgot to give his own wife his arm. Sallenuve was more thoughtful. As they walked together in the wake of her husband, Madame de l’Estorade said, —

“I saw you talking for a long time with Monsieur de Rastignac; did he practise his well-known seductions upon you?”

“Do you think he succeeded?” replied Sallenuve.

“No; but such attempts to capture are always disagreeable, and I beg you to believe that I was not a party to the plot. I am not so violently ministerial as my husband.”

“Nor I as violently revolutionary as they think.”

“I trust that these annoying politics, which have already produced a jar between you and Monsieur de l’Estorade, may not disgust you with the idea of being counted among our friends.”

“That is an honor, madame, for which I can only be grateful.”

“It is not an honor but a pleasure that I hoped you would find in it,” said Madame de l’Estorade, quickly. “I say, with Naïs, if I had saved the life of a friend’s child, I should cease to be ceremonious with her.”

So saying, and without listening to his answer, she disengaged her arm quickly from that of Sallenaue, and left him rather astonished at the tone in which she had spoken.

In seeing Madame de l’Estorade so completely docile to the advice, more clever than prudent perhaps, of Madame de Camps, the reader, we think, can scarcely be surprised. A certain attraction has been evident for some time on the part of the frigid countess not only to the preserver of her daughter, but to the man who under such romantic and singular circumstances had come before her mind. Carefully considered, Madame de l’Estorade is seen to be far from one of those impassible natures which resist all affectionate emotions except those of the family. With a beauty that was partly Spanish, she had eyes which her friend Louise de Chaulieu declared could ripen peaches. Her coldness was not what physicians call congenital; her temperament was an acquired one. Marrying from *reason* a man whose mental insufficiency is very apparent, she made herself love him

out of pity and a sense of protection. Up to the present time, by means of a certain atrophy of heart, she had succeeded, without one failure, in making Monsieur de l'Estorade perfectly happy. With the same instinct, she had exaggerated the maternal sentiment to an almost inconceivable degree, until in that way she had fairly stifled all the other cravings of her nature. It must be said, however, that the success she had had in accomplishing this hard task was due in a great measure to *the circumstance* of Louise de Chaulieu. To her that dear mistaken one was like the drunken slave whom the Spartans made a living lesson to their children; and between the two friends a sort of tacit wager was established. Louise having taken the side of romantic passion, Renée held firmly to that of superior reason; and in order to win the game, she had maintained a courage of good sense and wisdom which might have cost her far more to practise without this incentive. At the age she had now reached, and with her long habit of self-control, we can understand how, seeing, as she believed, the approach of a love against which she had preached so vehemently, she should instantly set to work to rebuff it; but a man who did not feel that love, while thinking her ideally beautiful, and who possibly loved elsewhere, — a man who had saved her child from death and asked no recompense, who was grave, serious, and pre-occupied in an absorbing enterprise, — why should she still continue to think such a man dangerous? Why not grant to him, without further hesitation, the lukewarm sentiment of friendship?

## VI.

## CURIOSITY THAT CAME WITHIN AN ACE OF BEING FATAL.

ON returning to Ville d'Avray, Sallenaue was confronted by a singular event. Who does not know how sudden events upset the whole course of our lives, and place us, without our will, in compromising positions?

Sallenaue was not mistaken in feeling serious anxiety as to the mental state of his friend Marie-Gaston.

When that unfortunate man had left the scene of his cruel loss immediately after the death of his wife, he would have done a wiser thing had he then resolved never to revisit it. Nature, providentially ordered, provides that if those whose nearest and dearest are struck by the hand of death accept the decree with the resignation which ought to follow the execution of all necessary law, they will not remain too long under the influence of their grief. Rousseau has said, in his famous letter against suicide: "Sadness, weariness of spirit, regret, despair are not lasting sorrows, rooted forever in the soul; experience will always cast out that feeling of bitterness which makes us at first believe our grief eternal."

But this truth ceases to be true for imprudent and wilful persons, who seek to escape the first anguish of sorrow by flight or some violent distraction. All mental and moral suffering is a species of illness which,

taking time for its specific, will gradually wear out, in the long run, of itself. If, on the contrary, it is not allowed to consume itself slowly on the scene of its trouble, if it is fanned into flame by motion or violent remedies, we hinder the action of nature; we deprive ourselves of the blessed relief of comparative forgetfulness, promised to those who will accept their suffering, and so transform it into a chronic affection, the memories of which, though hidden, are none the less true and deep.

If we violently oppose this salutary process, we produce an acute evil, in which the imagination acts upon the heart; and as the latter from its nature is limited, while the former is infinite, it is impossible to calculate the violence of the impressions to which a man may yield himself.

When Marie-Gaston returned to the house at Ville d'Avray, after two years' absence, he fancied that only a tender if melancholy memory awaited him; but not a step could he make without recalling his lost joys and the agony of losing them. The flowers that his wife had loved, the lawns, the trees just budding into greenness under the warm breath of May, — they were here before his eyes; but she who had created this beauteous nature was lying cold in the earth. Amid all the charms and elegances gathered to adorn this nest of their love, there was nothing for the man who rashly returned to that dangerous atmosphere but sounds of lamentation, the moans of a renewed and now ever-living grief. Alarmed himself at the vertigo of sorrow which seized him, Marie-Gaston shrank, as Salleneuve had said, from taking the last step in his

ordeal; he had calmly discussed with his friend the details of the mausoleum he wished to raise above the mortal remains of his beloved Louise, but he had not yet brought himself to visit her grave in the village cemetery where he had laid them. There was everything, therefore, to fear from a grief which time had not only not assuaged, but, on the contrary, had increased by duration, until it was sharper and more intolerable than before.

The gates were opened by Philippe, the old servant, who had been constituted by Madame Gaston major-domo of the establishment.

“How is your master?” asked Salleneuve.

“He has gone away, monsieur,” replied Philippe.

“Gone away!”

“Yes, monsieur; with that English gentleman whom monsieur left here with him.”

“But without a word to me! Do you know where they have gone?”

“After dinner, which went off very well, monsieur suddenly gave orders to pack his travelling-trunk; he did part of it himself. During that time the Englishman, who said he would go into the park and smoke, asked me privately where he could go to write a letter without monsieur seeing him. I took him to my room; but I did not dare question him about this journey, for I never saw any one with such forbidding and uncommunicative manners. By the time the letter was written monsieur was ready, and without giving me any explanation they both got into the Englishman’s carriage, and I heard one of them say to the coachman, ‘Paris.’”

“What became of the letter?” asked Sallenaue.

“It is there in my room, where the Englishman gave it me secretly. It is addressed to monsieur.”

“Fetch it at once, my dear man,” cried Sallenaue.

After reading the letter, his face seemed to Philippe convulsed.

“Tell them not to unharness,” he said; and he read the letter through a second time.

When the old servant returned after executing the order, Sallenaue asked him at what hour they had started.

“About nine,” answered Philippe.

“Three hours in advance!” muttered the deputy, looking at his watch, and returning to the carriage which had brought him. As he was getting into it, the old majordomò forced himself to say,—

“Monsieur found no bad news in that letter, did he?”

“No; but your master may be absent for some time; keep the house in good order.” Then he said to the coachman, “Paris!”

The next day, quite early in the morning, Monsieur de l’Estorade was in his study, employed in a rather singular manner. It will be remembered that on the day when Sallenaue, then Dorlange the sculptor, had sent him the bust of Madame de l’Estorade, he had not found a place where, as he thought, the little masterpiece had a proper light. From the moment that Rastignac hinted to him that his intercourse with the sculptor, now deputy, might injure him at court, he had agreed with his son Armand that the artist had given to Madame de l’Estorade the air of a grisette;

but now that Sallenaue, by his resistance to ministerial blandishments, had taken an openly hostile attitude to the government, that bust seemed to the peer of France no longer worthy of exhibition, and the worthy man was now engaged in finding some dark corner where, without recourse to the absurdity of actually hiding it, it would be out of range of the eyes of visitors, whose questions as to its maker he should no longer be forced to answer. He was therefore perched on the highest step of his library ladder, holding in his hands the gift of the sculptor, and preparing to relegate it to the top of a bookcase, where it was destined to keep company with an owl and a cormorant shot by Armand during the recent holidays and stuffed by paternal pride, when the door of the study opened and Lucas announced, —

“Monsieur Philippe.”

The age of the old majordomo and the confidential post he occupied in Marie-Gaston's establishment seemed to the factotum of the house of l'Estorade to authorize the designation of “monsieur,” — a civility expectant of return, be it understood.

Descending from his eminence, the peer of France asked Philippe what brought him, and whether anything had happened at Ville d'Avray. The old servant related the singular departure of his master, and the no less singular departure of Sallenaue without a word of explanation; then he added, —

“This morning, while putting monsieur's room in order, a letter addressed to Madame la comtesse fell out of a book. As the letter was sealed and all ready to be sent, I supposed that monsieur, in the hurry of



departure, had forgotten to tell me to put it in the post. I thought therefore I had better bring it here myself. Perhaps Madame la comtesse will find in it some explanation of this sudden journey, about which I have dreamed all night."

Monsieur de l'Estorade took the letter.

"Three black seals!" he said.

"The color does n't surprise me," replied Philippe; "for since Madame's death monsieur has not laid off his mourning; but I do think three seals are rather strange."

"Very well," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "I will give the letter to my wife."

"If there should be anything in it to ease my mind about monsieur, would Monsieur le comte be so kind as to let me know?" said Philippe.

"You can rely on that, my good fellow. *Au revoir.*"

"I beg Monsieur le comte's pardon for offering an opinion," said the majordomo, not accepting the leave just given him to depart; "but in case the letter contained some bad news, does n't Monsieur le comte think that it would be best for him to know of it, in order to prepare Madame la comtesse for the shock?"

"What! Do you suppose —" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, not finishing his idea.

"I don't know; but monsieur has been very gloomy the last few days."

"To break the seal of a letter not addressed to us is always a serious thing to do," remarked the peer of France. "This bears my wife's address, but — in point of fact — it was never sent to her; in short, it is most embarrassing."

"But if by reading it some misfortune might be averted?"

"Yes, yes; that is just what keeps me in doubt."

Here Madame de l'Estorade cut the matter short by entering the room. Lucas had told her of the unexpected arrival of Philippe.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked with anxious curiosity.

The apprehensions Sallenaue had expressed the night before as to Marie-Gaston's condition returned to her mind. As soon as Philippe had repeated the explanations he had already given to her husband, she broke the seals of the letter.

Whatever may have been the contents of that disquieting epistle, nothing was reflected on Madame de l'Estorade's face.

"You say that your master left Ville d'Avray in company with an English gentleman," she said to Philippe. "Did he seem to go unwillingly, as if yielding to violence?"

"No, far from that, madame; he seemed to be rather cheerful."

"Well, there is nothing that need make us uneasy. This letter was written some days ago, and, in spite of its three black seals, it has no reference to anything that has happened since."

Philippe bowed and went away. As soon as husband and wife were alone together, Monsieur de l'Estorade said, stretching out his hand for the letter, —

"What did he write about?"

"No, don't read it," said the countess, not giving him the letter.

“Why not?”

“It would pain you. It is enough for me to have had the shock; I could scarcely control myself before that old servant.”

“Does it refer to suicide?”

Madame de l'Estorade nodded her head in affirmation.

“A real, immediate intention?”

“The letter is dated yesterday morning; and apparently, if it had not been for the providential arrival of that Englishman, the poor fellow would have taken advantage of Monsieur de Salleneuve's absence last night to kill himself.”

“The Englishman must have suspected his intention, and carried him off to divert him from it. If that is so, he won't let him out of his sight.”

“And we may also count on Monsieur Salleneuve, who has probably joined them by this time.”

“Then I don't see that there is anything so terrible in the letter;” and again he offered to take it.

“No,” said Madame de l'Estorade, drawing back, “if I ask you not to read it. Why give yourself painful emotions? The letter not only expresses the intention of suicide, but it shows that our poor friend is completely out of his mind.”

At this instant piercing screams from René, her youngest child, put Madame de l'Estorade into one of those maternal agitations which she less than any other woman was able to control.

“My God!” she cried, as she rushed from the study, “what has happened?”

Less ready to be alarmed, Monsieur de l'Estorade

contented himself by going to the door and asking a servant what was the matter.

"Oh, nothing, Monsieur le comte," replied the man. "Monsieur René in shutting a drawer pinched his finger; that's all."

The peer of France thought it unnecessary to convey himself to the scene of action; he knew, by experience in like cases, that he must let his wife's exaggerated maternal solicitude have free course, on pain of being sharply snubbed himself. As he returned to his desk, he noticed lying on the ground the famous letter, which Madame de l'Estorade had evidently dropped in her hasty flight. Opportunity and a certain fatality which appears to preside over the conduct of all human affairs, impelled Monsieur de l'Estorade, who thought little of the shock his wife had dreaded for him, to satisfy his curiosity by reading the letter.

Marie-Gaston wrote as follows: —

MADAME, — This letter will seem to you less amusing than those I addressed to you from Arcis-sur-Aube. But I trust you will not be alarmed by the decision which I now announce. I am going to rejoin my wife, from whom I have been too long separated; and this evening, shortly after midnight, I shall be with her, never to part again.

You have, no doubt, said to yourselves — you and Sallesnauve — that I was acting strangely in not visiting her grave; that is a remark that two of my servants made the other day, not being aware that I overheard them. I should certainly be a great fool to go and look at a stone in the cemetery which can make me no response, when every night, at twelve o'clock, I hear a little rap on the door of

my room, and our dear Louise comes in, not changed at all, except, as I think, more plump and beautiful. She has had great trouble in obtaining permission from Marie, queen of angels, to withdraw me from earth. But last night she brought me formal leave, sealed with green wax; and she also gave me a tiny vial of hydrocyanic acid. A single drop of that acid puts us to sleep, and on waking up we find ourselves on the other side.

Louise desired me to give you a message from her. I am to tell you that Monsieur de l'Estorade has a disease of the liver and will not live long, and that after his death you are to marry Sallenaive, because, on the *other side*, husbands and wives who really love each other are reunited; and she thinks we shall all four—she and I and you and Sallenaive—be much happier together than if we had your present husband, who is very dull, and whom you married reluctantly.

My message given, nothing remains for me, madame, but to wish you all the patience you need to continue for your allotted time in this low world, and to subscribe myself

Your very affectionately devoted

MARIE-GASTON.

If, after reading this letter, it had occurred to Monsieur de l'Estorade to look at himself in the glass, he would have seen, in the sudden convulsion and discoloration of his face, the outward and visible signs of the terrible blow which his unfortunate curiosity had brought down upon him. His heart, his mind, his self-respect staggered under one and the same shock; the madness evident in the sort of prediction made about him only added to his sense of its horror. Presently convincing himself, like a mussulman, that madmen have the gift of second sight, he believed he was a

lost man, and instantly a stabbing pain began on his liver side, while in the direction of Sallenaue, his predicted successor, an awful hatred succeeded to his mild good-will. But at the same time, conscious of the total want of reason and even of the absurdity of the impression which had suddenly surged into his mind, he was afraid lest its existence should be suspected, and he looked about him to see in what way he could conceal from his wife his fatal indiscretion, the consequences of which must forever weigh upon his life. It was certain, he thought, that if she found the paper in his study she would deduce therefrom the fact that he had read it. Rising from his desk, he softly opened the door leading from the study to the salon, crossed the latter room on tiptoe, and dropped the letter at the farther end of it, as Madame de l'Estorade might suppose she had herself done in her hasty departure. Then returning to his study, he scattered his papers over his desk, like a school-boy up to mischief, who wants to mislead his master by a show of application, intending to appear absorbed in his accounts when his wife returned. Useless to add that he listened with keen anxiety lest some other person than she should come into the salon; in which case he determined to rush out and prevent other eyes from reading the dreadful secrets contained in that paper.

Presently, however, the voice of Madame de l'Estorade, speaking to some one at the door of the salon, reassured him as to the success of his trick, and a moment later she entered the study accompanied by Monsieur Octave de Camps. Going forward to receive

his visitor, he was able to see through the half-opened door the place where he had thrown the letter. Not only had it disappeared, but he detected a movement which assured him that Madame de l'Estorade had tucked it away in that part of her gown where Louis XIV. did not dare to search for the secrets of Mademoiselle d'Hautefort.

"I have come, my dear friend," said Monsieur de Camps, "to get you to go with me to Rastignac's, as agreed on last night."

"Very good," said the peer, putting away his papers with a feverish haste that plainly indicated he was not in his usual state of mind.

"Don't you feel well?" asked Madame de l'Estorade, who knew her husband by heart too well not to be struck by the singular stupefaction of his manner, while at the same time, looking in his face, she saw the signs of internal convulsion.

"True," said Monsieur de Camps, "you certainly do not look so well as usual. If you prefer it, we will put off this visit."

"No, not at all," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade. "I have tired myself with this work, and I need the air. But what was the matter with René?" he inquired of his wife, whose attention he felt was unpleasantly fixed upon him. "What made him cry like that?"

"Oh, a mere nothing!" she replied, not relaxing her attention.

"Well, my dear fellow," said the peer, trying to take an easy tone, "just let me change my coat and I'll be with you."

When the countess was alone with Monsieur de Camps, she said, rather anxiously, —

“Don’t you think Monsieur de l’Estorade seems very much upset?”

“Yes; as I said just now, he does not look like himself. But the explanation he gave seems sufficient. This office life is bad for the health. I have never been as well as since I am actively engaged about my iron-works.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Madame de l’Estorade, with a heavy sigh; “he ought to have a more active life. It seems plain that there is something amiss with his liver.”

“What! because he is so yellow? He has been so ever since I have known him.”

“Oh, monsieur, I can’t be mistaken! There is something seriously the matter with him; and if you would kindly do me a service —”

“Madame, I am always at your orders.”

“When Monsieur de l’Estorade returns, speak of the injury to René’s finger, and tell me that little wounds like that sometimes have serious consequences if not attended to at once, and that will give me an excuse to send for Doctor Bianchon.”

“Certainly,” replied Monsieur de Camps; “but I really don’t think a physician is necessary. Still, if it reassures you —”

At this moment Monsieur de l’Estorade reappeared. He had almost recovered his usual expression of face, but he exhaled a strong odor of *mélisse des Carmes*, which indicated that he had felt the need of that tonic. Monsieur de Camps played his part admirably, and as



for Madame de l'Estorade it did not cost her much trouble to simulate maternal anxiety.

"My dear," she said to her husband, when Monsieur de Camps had delivered himself of his medical opinion, "as you return from Monsieur de Rastignac's, please call on Doctor Bianchon and ask him to come here."

"Pooh!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, shrugging his shoulders, "the idea of disturbing a busy man like him for what you yourself said was a mere nothing!"

"If you won't go, I shall send Lucas; Monsieur de Camps' opinion has completely upset me."

"If it pleases you to be ridiculous," said the peer of France, crossly, "I have no means of preventing it; but I beg you to remark one thing: if people disturb physicians for mere nonsense, they often can't get them when they are really wanted."

"Then you won't go for the doctor?"

"Not I," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade; "and if I had the honor of being anything in my own house, I should forbid you to send anybody in my place."

"My dear, you are the master here, and since you put so much feeling into your refusal, let us say no more; I will bear my anxiety as best I can."

"Come, de Camps," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "for if this goes on, I shall be sent to order that child's funeral."

"But, my dear husband," said the countess, taking his hand, "you must be ill, to say such dreadful things in that cool way. Where is your usual patience with my little maternal worries, or your exquisite politeness for every one, your wife included?"

"But," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, getting more

excited instead of calmer, under this form of studied though friendly reproach, "your maternal feelings are turning into monomania, and you make life intolerable to every one but your children. The devil! suppose they are your children; I am their father, and, though I am not adored as they are, I have the right to request that my house be not made uninhabitable!"

While Monsieur de l'Estorade, striding about the room, delivered himself of this philippic, the countess made a despairing sign to Monsieur de Camps, as if to ask him whether he did not see most alarming symptoms in such a scene. In order to cut short the quarrel of which he had been the involuntary cause, the latter said, as if hurried, —

"Come, let us go!"

"Yes," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade, passing out first and neglecting to say good-bye to his wife.

"Ah! stay; I have forgotten a message my wife gave me," said Monsieur de Camps, turning back to Madame de l'Estorade. "She told me to say she would come for you at two o'clock to go and see the spring things at the 'Jean de Paris,' and she has arranged that after that we shall all four go to the flower-show. When we leave Rastignac, l'Estorade and I will come back here, and wait for you if you have not returned before us."

Madame de l'Estorade paid little attention to this programme, for a flash of light had illumined her mind. As soon as she was alone, she took Marie-Gaston's letter from her gown, and, finding it folded in the proper manner, she exclaimed, —

"Not a doubt of it! I remember perfectly that I

folded it with the writing outside, as I put it back into the envelope ; he must have read it ! ”

An hour later, Madame de l'Estorade and Madame de Camps met in the same salon where they had talked of Sallenaue a few days earlier.

“ Good heavens ! what is the matter with you ? ” cried Madame de Camps, seeing tears on the face of her friend, who was finishing a letter she had written.

Madame de l'Estorade told her all that had happened, and showed her Marie-Gaston's letter.

“ Are you very sure,” asked Madame de Camps, “ that your husband has read the luckless scrawl ? ”

“ How can I doubt it ? ” returned Madame de l'Estorade. “ The paper can't have turned of itself ; besides, in recalling the circumstances, I have a dim recollection that at the moment when I started to run to René I felt something drop, — fate willed that I should not stop to pick it up.”

“ Often, when people strain their memories in that way they fasten on some false indication.”

“ But, my dear friend, the extraordinary change in the face and behavior of Monsieur de l'Estorade, coming so suddenly as it did, must have been the result of some sudden shock. He looked like a man struck by lightning.”

“ But if you account for the change in his appearance in that way, why look for symptoms of something wrong with his liver ? ”

“ Ah ! this is not the first time I have seen symptoms of that,” replied Madame de l'Estorade. “ But you know when sick people don't complain, we forget about their illness. See,” and she pointed to a volume

lying open beside her; "just before you came in, I found in this medical dictionary that persons who suffer from diseases of the liver are apt to be morose, irritable, impatient. Well, for some time past, I have noticed a great change in my husband's disposition. You yourself mentioned it to me the other day. Besides, the scene Monsieur de Camps has just witnessed — which is, I may truly say, unprecedented in our household — is enough to prove it."

"My dear love, you are like those unpleasant persons who are resolved to torture themselves. In the first place, you have looked into medical books, which is the very height of imprudence. I defy you to read a description of any sort of disease without fancying that either you or some friends of yours have the symptoms of it. In the next place, you are mixing up things; the effects of fear and of a chronic malady are totally different."

"No, I am not mixing them up; I know what I am talking about. You don't need to be told that if in our poor human machine some one part gets out of order, it is on *that* that any strong emotion will strike."

"Well," said Madame de Camps, not pursuing the medical discussion, "if the letter of that unhappy madman has really fallen into the hands of your husband, the peace of your home is seriously endangered; that is the point to be discussed."

"There are not two ways to be followed as to that," said Madame de l'Estorade. "Monsieur de Salleneuve must never set foot in this house again."

"That is precisely what I came to speak about to-day. Do you know that last night I did not think you

showed the composure which is so marked a trait in your character?"

"When?" asked Madame de l'Estorade.

"Why, when you expressed so effusively your gratitude to Monsieur de Sallenaue. When I advised you not to avoid him, for fear it would induce him to keep at your heels, I never intended that you should shower your regard upon his head in a way to turn it. The wife of so zealous a dynastic partisan as Monsieur de l'Estorade ought to know what the *juste milieu* is by this time."

"Ah! my dear, I entreat you, don't make fun of my poor husband."

"I am not talking of your husband, I am talking of you. Last night you so surprised me that I have come here to take back my words. I like people to follow my advice, but I don't like them to go beyond it."

"At any other time I should make you explain what horrible impropriety I have committed under your counsel; but fate has interposed and settled everything. Monsieur de Sallenaue will, at any cost, disappear from our path, and therefore why discuss the degree of kindness one might have shown him?"

"But," said Madame de Camps, "since I must tell you all, I have come to think him a dangerous acquaintance, — less for you than for some one else."

"Who?" asked Madame de l'Estorade.

"Naïs. That child, with her passion for her 'preserver,' makes me really uneasy."

"Oh!" said the countess, smiling rather sadly, "are not you giving too much importance to childish nonsense?"

“Naïs is, of course, a child, but a child who will ripen quickly into a woman. Did you not tell me yourself that you were sometimes frightened at the intuition she showed in matters beyond her years?”

“That is true. But what you call her passion for Monsieur de Sallenaue, besides being perfectly natural, is expressed by the dear little thing with such freedom and publicity that the sentiment is, it seems to me, obviously childlike.”

“Well, don’t trust to that; especially not after this troublesome being ceases to come to your house. Suppose that when the time comes to marry your daughter, this fancy should have smouldered in her heart and increased; imagine your difficulty!”

“Oh! between now and then, thank Heaven! there’s time enough,” replied Madame de l’Estorade, in a tone of incredulity.

“Between now and then,” said Madame de Camps, “Monsieur de Sallenaue may have reached a distinction which will put his name on every lip; and Naïs, with her lively imagination, is more likely than other girls to be dazzled by it.”

“But, my dear love, look at the disproportion in their ages.”

“Monsieur de Sallenaue is thirty, and Naïs will soon be fourteen; that is precisely the difference between you and Monsieur de l’Estorade.”

“Well, you may be right,” said Madame de l’Estorade, “and the sort of marriage I made from reason Naïs may want to make from folly. But you need n’t be afraid; I will ruin that idol in her estimation.”

“But there again, as in the comedy of hatred you mean to play for Monsieur de l’Estorade’s benefit, you need moderation. If you do not manage it by careful transitions, you may miss your end. Never allow the influence of circumstances to appear when it is desirable that an impulse or an action should seem spontaneous.”

“But,” said Madame de l’Estorade, excitedly, “do you think that my hatred, as you call it, will be acted? I do hate him, that man; he is our evil genius!”

“Come, come, my dear, be calm! I don’t know you — you, who have always been Reason incarnate.”

At this moment Lucas entered the room and asked his mistress if she would receive *a* Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau. Madame de l’Estorade looked at her friend, as if to consult her.

“He is that organist who was so useful to Monsieur de Sallenaue during the election. I don’t know what he can want of me.”

“Never mind,” said Madame de Camps, “receive him. Before beginning hostilities it is always well to know what is going on in the enemy’s camp.”

“Show him in,” said the countess.

Jacques Bricheteau entered. Expecting to be received in a friendly country, he had not taken any particular pains with his dress. An old maroon frock-coat to the cut of which it would have been difficult to assign a date, a plaid waistcoat buttoned to the throat, surmounted by a black cravat worn without a collar and twisted round the neck, yellowish trousers, gray stockings, and laced shoes, — such was the more than negligent costume in which the organist allowed himself to appear in a countess’s salon.

Requested briefly to sit down, he said, —

“Madame, I hope I am not indiscreet in thus presenting myself without having the honor of being known to you, but Monsieur Marie-Gaston told me of your desire that I should give music-lessons to your daughter. At first I replied that it was impossible, for all my time was occupied; but the prefect of police has just afforded me some leisure by dismissing me from a place I filled in his department; therefore I am now happy to place myself at your disposal.”

“Your dismissal, monsieur, was caused by your activity in Monsieur de Sallenaue’s election, was it not?” asked Madame de Camps.

“As no reason was assigned for it, I think your conjecture is probably correct; especially as in twenty years I have had no trouble whatever with my chiefs.”

“It can’t be denied,” said Madame de l’Estorade, sharply, “that you have opposed the views of the government by this proceeding.”

“Consequently, madame, I have accepted this dismissal as an expected evil. What interest, after all, had I in retaining my paltry post, compared to that of Monsieur de Sallenaue’s election?”

“I am very sorry,” resumed Madame de l’Estorade, “to be unable to accept the offer you are good enough to make me. But I have not yet considered the question of a music-master for my daughter; and, in any case, I fear that, in view of your great and recognized talent, your instruction would be too advanced for a little girl of fourteen.”

“Well,” said Jacques Bricheteau, smiling, “no one has recognized my talent, madame. Monsieur de Salle-



nauve and Monsieur Marie-Gaston have only heard me once or twice. Apart from that I am the most obscure of professors, and perhaps the dullest. But setting aside the question of your daughter's master, I wish to speak of a far more important interest, which has, in fact, brought me here. I mean Monsieur de Sallenaue."

"Has Monsieur de Sallenaue," said Madame de l'Estorade, with marked coldness of manner, "sent you here with a message to my husband?"

"No, madame," replied Jacques Bricheteau, "he has unfortunately given me no message. I cannot find him. I went to Ville d'Avray this morning, and was told that he had started on a journey with Monsieur Marie-Gaston. The servant having told me that the object and direction of this journey were probably known to you —"

"Not in any way," interrupted Madame de l'Estorade, curtly.

Not as yet perceiving that his visit was unacceptable and that no explanation was desired, Jacques Bricheteau persisted in his statement: —

"This morning I received a letter from the notary at Arcis-sur-Aube, who informs me that my aunt, Mother Marie-des-Anges, desires me to be told of a scandalous intrigue now being organized for the purpose of ousting Monsieur de Sallenaue from his post as deputy. The absence of our friend will seriously complicate the matter. We can take no steps without him; and I cannot understand why he should disappear without informing those who take the deepest interest in him."

“That he has not informed you is certainly singular,” replied Madame de l’Estorade, in the same freezing tone; “but as for my husband or me, there is nothing to be surprised about.”

The meaning of this discourteous answer was too plain for Jacques Bricheteau not to perceive it. He looked straight at the countess, who lowered her eyes; but the whole expression of her countenance, due north, confirmed the meaning he could no longer mistake in her words.

“Pardon me, madame,” he said, rising. “I was not aware that the future and the reputation of Monsieur de Sallenaue had become indifferent to you. Only a moment ago, in your antechamber, when your servant hesitated to take in my name, Mademoiselle, your daughter, as soon as she heard I was the friend of Monsieur de Sallenaue, took my part warmly; and I had the stupidity to suppose that such friendliness was the tone of the family.”

After this remark, which gave Madame de l’Estorade the full change for her coin, Jacques Bricheteau bowed ceremoniously and was about to leave the room, when a sudden contradiction of the countess’s comedy of indifference appeared in the person of Naïs, who rushed in exclaiming triumphantly, —

“Mamma, a letter from Monsieur de Sallenaue!”

The countess turned crimson.

“What do you mean by running in here like a crazy girl?” she said sternly; “and how do you know that this letter is from the person you mention?”

“Oh!” replied Naïs, twisting the knife in the wound, “when he wrote you those letters from Arcis-sur-Aube, I saw his handwriting.”

"You are a silly, inquisitive little girl," said her mother, driven by these aggravating circumstances quite outside of her usual habits of indulgence. "Go to your room." Then she added to Jacques Bricheteau, who lingered after the luckless arrival of the letter, —

"Permit me, monsieur."

"It is for me, madame, to ask permission to remain until you have read that letter. If *by chance* Monsieur de Sallenaue gives you any particulars about his journey, you will, perhaps, allow me to profit by them."

"Monsieur de Sallenaue," said the countess, after reading the letter, "requests me to inform my husband that he has gone to Hanwell, county of Middlesex, England. You can address him there, monsieur, to the care of Doctor Ellis."

Jacques Bricheteau made a second ceremonious bow and left the room.

"Naïs has just given you a taste of her quality," said Madame de Camps; "but you deserved it, — you really treated that poor man too harshly."

"I could not help it," replied Madame de l'Estorade; "the day began wrong, and all the rest follows suit."

"Well, about the letter?"

"It is dreadful; read it yourself."

MADAME (wrote Sallenaue), — I was able to overtake Lord Lewin, the Englishman of whom I spoke to you, a few miles out of Paris. Providence sent him to Ville d'Avray to save us from an awful misfortune. Possessing an immense fortune, he is, like so many of his countrymen, a victim to *spleen*, and it is only his natural force of character which has saved him from the worst results of that malady. His indifference to life and the perfect coolness with which he

spoke of suicide won him Marie-Gaston's friendship in Florence. Lord Lewin, having studied the subject of violent emotions, is very intimate with Doctor Ellis, a noted alienist, and it not infrequently happens that he spends two or three weeks with him at Hanwell, Middlesex Co., one of the best-managed lunatic asylums in England, — Doctor Ellis being in charge of it.

When he arrived at Ville d'Avray, Lord Lewin saw at once that Marie-Gaston had all the symptoms of incipient mania. Invisible to other eyes, they were apparent to those of Lord Lewin. In speaking to me of our poor friend, he used the word *chiffonnait*, — meaning that he picked up rubbish as he walked, bits of straw, scraps of paper, rusty nails, and put them carefully into his pocket. That, he informed me, is a marked symptom well known to those who study the first stages of insanity. Enticing him to the subject of their conversations in Florence, he obtained the fact that the poor fellow meditated suicide, and the reason for it. Every night, Gaston told him, his wife appeared to him, and he had now resolved to *rejoin* her, to use his own expression. Instead of opposing this idea, Lord Lewin took a tone of approval. "But," he said, "men such as we ought not to die in a common way. I myself have always had the idea of going to South America, where, not far from Paraguay, there is one of the greatest cataracts in the world, — the Saut de Gayra. The mists rising from it can be seen at a distance of many miles. An enormous volume of water is suddenly forced through a narrow channel, and rushes with terrific force and the noise of a hundred thunder-claps into the gulf below. There, indeed, one could find a noble death."

"Let us go there," said Gaston.

"Yes," said Lord Lewin, "I am ready to go at once; we must sail from England; it will take a few weeks to get there."

In this way, madame, he enticed our poor friend to England, where, as you will already have supposed, he has placed

him in charge of Doctor Ellis, who, they say, has not his equal in Europe for the treatment of this particular form of mental aberration.

I joined them at Beauvais, and have followed them to Hanwell, taking care not to be seen by Marie-Gaston. Here I shall be detained until the doctor is able to give a decided opinion as to the probable results of our friend's condition. I greatly fear, however, that I cannot possibly return to Paris in time for the opening of the session. But I shall write to the president of the Chamber, and in case any question regarding my absence should arise, may I ask Monsieur de l'Estorade to do me the favor of stating that, to his knowledge, I have been absolutely forced by sufficient reasons to absent myself? He will, of course, understand that I ought not to explain under any circumstances the nature of the affair which has taken me out of the country at this unlucky time; but I am certain it will be all-sufficient if a man of Monsieur de l'Estorade's position and character guarantees the necessity of my absence.

I beg you to accept, madame, etc., etc.

As Madame de Camps finished reading the letter, the sound of a carriage entering the courtyard was heard.

"There are the gentlemen," said the countess. "Now, had I better show this letter to my husband or not?"

"You can't avoid doing so," replied Madame de Camps. "In the first place, Naïs will chatter about it. Besides, Monsieur de Sallenaue addresses you in a most respectful manner, and there is nothing in the letter to feed your husband's notion."

"Who is that common-looking man I met on the stairs talking with Naïs?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade to his wife, as he entered the salon.

As Madame de l'Estorade did not seem to understand him, he added, —

“He is pitted with the small-pox, and wears a maroon coat and shabby hat.”

“Oh!” said Madame de Camps, addressing her friend; “it must be the man who was here just now. Naïs has seized the occasion to inquire about her idol.”

“But who is he?” repeated Monsieur de l'Estorade.

“I think his name is Bricheteau; he is a friend of Monsieur de Sallenaue,” replied Madame de Camps.

Seeing the cloud on her husband's brow, Madame de l'Estorade hastened to explain the double object of the organist's visit, and she gave him the letter of the new deputy. While he was reading it, Madame de l'Estorade said, aside, to Monsieur de Camps, —

“He seems to me much better, don't you think so?”

“Yes; there's scarcely a trace left of what we saw this morning. He was too wrought up about his work. Going out did him good; and yet he met with a rather unpleasant surprise at Rastignac's.”

“What was it?” asked Madame de l'Estorade, anxiously.

“It seems that the affairs of your friend Sallenaue are going wrong.”

“Thanks for the commission!” said Monsieur de l'Estorade, returning the letter to his wife. “I shall take very good care not to guarantee his conduct in any respect.”

“Have you heard anything disagreeable about him?” asked Madame de l'Estorade, endeavoring to give a tone of indifference to her question.

“Yes; Rastignac has just told me of letters received

from Arcis, where they have made the most compromising discoveries."

"Well, what did I tell you?" cried Madame de l'Estorade.

"How do you mean? What *did* you tell me?"

"I told you some time ago that the acquaintance was one that had better be allowed to die out. I remember using that very expression."

"But *I* did n't draw him here."

"Well, you can't say that I did; and just now, before I knew of these discoveries you speak of, I was telling Madame de Camps of another reason why it was desirable to put an end to the acquaintance."

"Yes," said Madame de Camps, "your wife and I were just discussing, as you came in, the sort of frenzy Naïs has taken for what she calls her 'preserver.' We agreed in thinking there might be future danger in that direction."

"From all points of view," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "it is an unwholesome acquaintance."

"It seems to me," said Monsieur de Camps, who was not in the secret of these opinions, "that you go too fast. They may have made what they call compromising discoveries about Monsieur de Sallenauve; but what is the value of those discoveries? Don't hang him till a verdict has been rendered."

"My husband can do as he likes," said Madame de l'Estorade; "but as for me, I shall drop the acquaintance at once. I want my friends to be, like Cæsar's wife, beyond suspicion."

"Unfortunately," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "there's that unfortunate obligation —"

"But, my dear," cried Madame de l'Estorade, "if a galley-slave saved my life, must I admit him to my salon?"

"Oh! dearest," exclaimed Madame de Camps, "you are going too far."

"At any rate," said the peer of France, "there is no need to make an open rupture; let things end quietly between us. The dear man is now in foreign parts, and who knows if he means to return?"

"What!" exclaimed Monsieur de Camps, "has he left the country for a mere rumor?"

"Not precisely for that reason," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "he found a pretext. But once out of France, you know —"

"I don't believe in that conclusion," said Madame de l'Estorade; "I think he will return, and if so, my dear, you really must take your courage in both hands and cut short his acquaintance."

"Is that," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, looking attentively at his wife, "your actual desire?"

"Mine?" she replied; "if I had my way, I should write to him and say that he would do us a favor by not reappearing in our house. As that would be rather a difficult letter to write, let us write it together, if you are willing."

"We will see about it," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, brightening up under this suggestion; "there's no danger in going slow. The most pressing thing at this moment is the flower-show; I think it closes at four o'clock; if so, we have only an hour before us."

Madame de l'Estorade, who had dressed before the arrival of Madame de Camps, rang for her maid to



bring her a bonnet and shawl. While she was putting them on before a mirror, her husband came up behind her and whispered in her ear, —

“Then you really love me, Renée?”

“Are you crazy, to ask me such a question as that?” she answered, looking at him affectionately.

“Well, then, I must make a confession: that letter, which Philippe brought — I read it.”

“Then I am not surprised at the change in your looks and manner,” said his wife. “I, too, will make you a confession: that letter to Monsieur de Sallenaue, giving him his dismissal, — I have written it; you will find it in my blotting-book. If you think it will do, send it.”

Quite beside himself with delight at finding his proposed successor so readily sacrificed, Monsieur de l’Estorade did not control his joy; taking his wife in his arms, he kissed her effusively.

“Well done!” cried Monsieur de Camps, laughing; “you have improved since morning.”

“This morning I was a fool,” said the peer of France, hunting in the blotting-book for the letter, which he might have had the grace to believe in without seeing.

“Hush!” said Madame de Camps, in a low voice to her husband, to prevent further remarks. “I’ll explain this queer performance to you by and by.”

Rejuvenated by ten years at least, the peer of France offered his arm to Madame de Camps, while the amateur iron-master offered his to the countess.

“But Naïs!” said Monsieur de l’Estorade, noticing the melancholy face of his daughter, who was looking

over the stairs at the party. "Is n't she going too?"

"No," said the countess; "I am displeased with her."

"Ah, bah!" said the father. "I proclaim an amnesty. Get your hat," he added, addressing his daughter.

Naïs looked at her mother to obtain a ratification, which her knowledge of the hierarchy of power in that establishment made her judge to be necessary.

"You can come," said her mother, "if your father wishes it."

While they waited in the antechamber for the child, Monsieur de l'Estorade noticed that Lucas was standing up beside a half-finished letter.

"Whom are you writing to?" he said to his old servant.

"To my son," replied Lucas, "who is very impatient to get his sergeant's stripes. I am telling him that Monsieur le comte has promised to speak to his colonel for him."

"True, true," said the peer of France; "it slipped my memory. Remind me of it to-morrow morning, and I'll do it the first thing after I am up."

"Monsieur le comte is very good —"

"And here," continued his master, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, and producing three gold pieces, "send that to the corporal, and tell him to drink a welcome to the stripes."

Lucas was stupefied. Never had he seen his master so expansive or so generous.

When Naïs returned, Madame de l'Estorade, who

had been admiring herself for her courage in showing displeasure to her daughter for half an hour, embraced her as if they were meeting after an absence of two years; after which they started for the Luxembourg, where in those days the Horticultural Society held its exhibitions.

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## VII.

## THE WAY TO MANAGE POLITICAL INTRIGUES.

TOWARD the close of the audience given by the minister of Public Works to Monsieur Octave de Camps, who was presented by the Comte de l'Estorade, an usher entered the room, and gave the minister the card of the attorney-general, Monsieur Vinet, and that of Monsieur Maxime de Trailles.

"Very good," said Rastignac; "say to those gentlemen that I will receive them in a few moments."

Shortly after, Monsieur de l'Estorade and Monsieur de Camps rose to take leave; and it was then that Rastignac very succinctly let the peer know of the danger looming on the horizon of his friend Sallenuve. Monsieur de l'Estorade exclaimed against the word *friend*.

"I don't know, my dear minister," he said, "why you insist on giving that title to a man who is, really and truly, a mere acquaintance, and, I may add, a passing acquaintance, if the rumors you have just mentioned to us take actual shape."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the minister, "because the friendly relations which I supposed you to hold towards him would have embarrassed me a good deal in the hostilities which I foresee must break out between him and the government."

"Most grateful, I am sure, for that sentiment," replied the peer of France; "but be kind enough to remember that I give you *carte blanche*. You are free to handle Monsieur de Sallenaue as your political enemy, without a moment's fear of troubling me."

Thereupon they parted, and Messieurs Vinet and de Trailles were introduced.

The attorney-general, Vinet, was the most devoted and the most consulted champion of the government among its various officials. In a possible reconstitution of the ministry he was obviously the candidate for the portfolio of justice. Being thoroughly initiated into all the business of that position, and versed in its secret dealings, nothing was hatched in that department on which he was not consulted, if not actually engaged. The electoral matters of Arcis-sur-Aube had a double claim to his interest, partly on account of his wife, a Chargebœuf of Brie, and a relative of the Cinq-Cygnés, but chiefly because of the office held by his son in the local administration. So that when, earlier in the morning, Monsieur de Trailles carried to Rastignac a letter from Madame Beauvisage, wife of the defeated governmental candidate, full of statements injurious to the new deputy, the minister had replied, without listening to any explanations, —

"See Vinet about it; and tell him, from me, to come here with you."

Notified by de Trailles, who offered to fetch him in his carriage, Vinet was ready enough to go to the minister; and now that we find the three together in

Rastignac's study, we shall be likely to obtain some better knowledge of the sort of danger hanging over Sallenuve's head than we gained from Jacques Brichteau's or Monsieur de l'Estorade's very insufficient information.

"You say, my dear friends," said the minister, "that we can win a game against that puritan, who seemed to me, when I met him at l'Estorade's last evening, to be an out-and-out enemy to the government?"

Admitted to this interview without official character, Maxime de Trailles knew life too well to take upon himself to answer this query. The attorney-general, on the contrary, having a most exalted sense of his own political importance, did not miss the opportunity to put himself forward.

"When Monsieur de Trailles communicated to me this morning a letter from Madame Beauvisage," he hastened to say, "I had just received one from my son, conveying to me very much the same information. I am of Monsieur de Trailles' opinion, that the affair may become very serious for our adversary, provided, however, that it is well managed."

"I know, as yet, very little about the affair," remarked the minister. "As I wished for your opinion in the first place, my dear Vinet, I requested Monsieur de Trailles to postpone his explanation of its details until you could be present at the discussion."

This time Maxime was plainly authorized and even required to speak, but again Vinet stole the opportunity.

"Here is what my son Olivier writes me, and it is

confirmed by the letter of Madame Beauvisage, in whom, be it said in passing, my dear minister, you have lost a most excellent deputy. It appears that on the last market-day Maitre Antoine Pigoult, who is left in charge of the affairs of the new deputy, received a visit from a peasant-woman of Romilly, a large village in the neighborhood of Arcis. The mysterious father of the deputy, the so-called Marquis de Sallenaue, declared himself to be the last remaining scion of the family; but it seems that this woman produced papers in due form, which show her to be a Sallenaue in the direct line, and within the degree of parentage required to constitute her an heir."

"Was she as ignorant of the existence of the Marquis de Sallenaue as the marquis seems to have been of hers?" asked Rastignac.

"That does not clearly appear from what she says," replied the attorney-general; "but it might so happen among relations so curiously placed."

"Go on, if you please," said Rastignac; "before we draw conclusions we must know the facts, which, as you are aware, is not always done in the Chamber of deputies."

"Fortunately, sometimes, for the ministers," remarked Maxime, laughing.

"Monsieur is right," said Vinet; "hail to the man who can muddle questions. But to return to our peasant-woman. Not being satisfied, naturally, with Maitre Pigoult's reception of her news, she went into the market-square, and there by the help of a legal practitioner from her village, who seems to have accompanied her, she spread about reports which are

very damaging to my worthy colleague in the Chamber. She said, for instance, that it was not true that the Marquis de Sallenaue was his father; that it was not even true that the Marquis de Sallenaue was still living; and moreover that this spurious Sallenaue was a man of no heart, who had repudiated his real parents, — adding that she could, by the help of the able man who accompanied her, compel him to disgorge the Sallenaue property and ‘clear out’ of the place.”

“I have no objection to that,” said Rastignac; “but this woman must, of course, have papers to prove her allegations?”

“That is the weak point of the matter,” replied Vinet. “But let me go on with my story. The government has at Arcis a most intelligent and devoted functionary in the commissary of police. Circulating among the groups, as he usually does on market days, he heard these statements of the peasant-woman, and reported them at once, not to the mayor, who might not have heeded them, but to Madame Beauvisage.”

“*Ah ça!*” said Rastignac, addressing Maxime; “was the candidate you gave us such a dolt as that?”

“Just the man you needed,” replied Maxime, — “silly to the last degree, and capable of being wound round anybody’s finger. I’ll go any lengths to repair that loss.”

“Madame Beauvisage,” continued Vinet, “wished to speak with the woman herself, and she ordered Groslier — that’s the commissary of police — to fetch her with a threatening air to the mayor’s office, so as



to give her an idea that the authorities disapproved of her conduct."

"Did Madame Beauvisage concoct that plan?" asked Rastignac.

"Yes," replied Maxime, "she is a very clever woman."

"Questioned closely by the mayoress," continued Vinet, "who took care to have the mayor present, the peasant-woman was far from categorical. Her grounds for asserting that the new deputy could not be the son of the marquis, and the assurance with which she stated that the latter had long been dead were not, as it appears, very clearly established; vague rumors and the deductions drawn by the village practitioner seem to be all there was to them."

"Then," said Rastignac, "what does all this lead to?"

"Absolutely nothing from a legal point of view," replied the attorney-general; "for supposing the woman were able to establish the fact that this recognition of the said Dorlange was a mere pretence, she has no status on which to proceed farther. By Article 339 of the Civil Code direct heirship alone has the right to attack the recognition of natural children."

"Your balloon is collapsing fast," said the minister.

"So that the woman," continued Vinet, "has no object in proceeding, for she can't inherit; it belongs to the government to pursue the case of supposition of person; she can do no more than denounce the fact."

"From which you conclude?" said Rastignac, with that curtness of speech which to a prolix speaker is a warning to be concise.

"From which I conclude, judicially speaking, that

the Romilly peasant-woman, so far as she is concerned, will have her trouble for her pains; but, speaking politically, the thing takes quite another aspect."

"Let us see the political side," said the minister; "up to this point, I see nothing."

"In the first place," replied the attorney-general, "you will admit that it is always possible to bring a bad case?"

"Certainly."

"And I don't suppose it would signify much to you if the woman did embark in a matter in which she can lose nothing but her costs?"

"No, I assure you I am wholly indifferent."

"In any case, I should have advised you to let things take their course. The Beauvisage husband and wife have engaged to pay the costs and also the expense of keeping the peasant-woman and her counsel in Paris during the inquiry."

"Then," said Rastignac, still pressing for a conclusion, "the case is really begun. What will be the result?"

"What will be the result?" cried the attorney-general, getting excited; "why, anything you please if, *before the case comes for trial*, your newspapers comment upon it, and your friends spread reports and insinuations. What will result? why, an immense fall in public estimation for our adversary suspected of stealing a name which does not belong to him! What will result? why, the opportunity for a fierce challenge in the Chamber."

"Which you will take upon yourself to make?" asked Rastignac.

“ Ah ! I don’t know about that. The matter would have to be rather more studied, and the turn the case might take more certain, if I had anything to do with it.”

“ So, for the present,” remarked the minister, “ the whole thing amounts to an application of Basile’s famous theory about calumny : ‘ good to set a-going, because some of it will always stick. ’ ”

“ Calumny ! ” exclaimed Vinet, “ that remains to be seen. Perhaps a good round of gossip is all that can be made of it. Monsieur de Trailles, here, knows better than I do the state of things down there. He can tell you that the disappearance of the father immediately after the recognition had a bad effect upon people’s minds ; and every one in Arcis has a vague impression of secret plotting in this affair of the election. You don’t know, my dear minister, all that can be made in the provinces of a judicial affair when adroitly manipulated, — cooked, as I may say. In my long and laborious career at the bar I saw plenty of that kind of miracle. But a parliamentary debate is another thing. In that there’s no need of proof ; one can kill one’s man with probabilities and assertions, if hotly maintained.”

“ But, to come to the point,” said Rastignac, “ how do you think the affair ought to be managed ? ”

“ In the first place,” replied Vinet, “ I should leave the Beauvisage people to pay all costs of whatever kind, inasmuch as they propose to do so.”

“ Do I oppose that ? ” said the minister. “ Have I the right or the means to do so ? ”

“ The affair,” continued Vinet, “ should be placed

in the hands of some capable and wily solicitor, like Desroches, for example, Monsieur de Trailles' lawyer. He'll know how to put flesh on the bones of a case you justly consider rather thin."

"Well, it is certainly not my place to say to Monsieur de Trailles or any man, 'I forbid you to employ whom you will as your solicitor.'"

"Then we need some pleader who can talk in a moving way about that sacred thing the Family, and put himself into a state of indignation about these surreptitious and furtive ways of entering its honored enclosure."

"Desroches can point out some such person to you. The government cannot prevent a man from saying what he pleases."

"But," interposed Maxime, who was forced out of his passive rôle by the minister's coldness, "is *not preventing* all the help we are to expect in this affair from the government?"

"You don't expect us, I hope, to take this matter upon ourselves?"

"No, of course not; but we have certainly supposed that you would take some interest in the matter."

"But how? — in what way?"

"Well, as Monsieur le procureur said just now, by giving a hint to the subsidized newspapers, by stirring up your friends to spread the news, by using a certain influence which power always exerts on the minds of magistrates."

"Thank you, no!" replied Rastignac. "When you want the government for an accomplice, my dear Maxime, you must provide a better-laid plot than that."

From your manner this morning I supposed there was really something in all this, and so I ventured to disturb our excellent attorney-general, who knows how I value his advice. But really, your scheme seems to me too transparent and also too narrow not to be doomed to inevitable defeat. If I were not married, and could pretend to the hand of Mademoiselle Beauvisage, perhaps I should feel differently; of course you will do as you think best. I do not say that the government will not wish you well in your attempt, but it certainly cannot descend to make it with you."

"But see," said Vinet, interposing to cut off Maxime's reply, which would doubtless have been bitter; "suppose we send the affair to the criminal courts, and the peasant-woman, instigated by the Beauvisage couple, should denounce the man who had sworn before a notary, and offered himself for election falsely, as a Sallenauve: the question is one for the court of assizes."

"But proofs? I return to that, you must have proof," said Rastignac. "Have you even a shadow of it?"

"You said yourself, just now," remarked Maxime, "that it was always possible to bring a bad case."

"A civil case, yes; but to fail in a criminal case is a far more serious matter. It would be a pretty thing if you were shown not to have a leg to stand on, and the case ended in a decision of *non-lieu*. You could n't find a better way to put our enemy on a pedestal as high as the column of July."

"So," said Maxime, "you see absolutely nothing that can be done?"

"For us, no. For you, my dear Maxime, who have no official character, and who, if need be, can support the attack on Monsieur de Sallenaue pistol in hand, as it were, nothing hinders you from proceeding in the matter."

"Oh, yes!" said Maxime, bitterly, "I'm a sort of free lance."

"Not at all; you are a man intuitively convinced of facts impossible to prove legally, and you do not give way before the judgment of God or man."

Monsieur de Trailles rose angrily. Vinet rose also, and, shaking hands with Rastignac as he took leave of him, he said, —

"I don't deny that your course is a prudent one, and I don't say that in your place I should not do the same thing."

"Adieu, Maxime; without bitterness, I hope," said Rastignac to Monsieur de Trailles, who bowed coldly and with dignity.

When the two conspirators were alone in the ante-chamber, Maxime turned to his companion.

"Do you understand such squeamishness?" he asked.

"Perfectly," replied Vinet, "and I wonder to see a clever man like you so duped."

"Yes, duped to make you lose your time and I mine by coming here to listen to a lecture on virtue!"

"That's not it; but I do think you guileless to be taken in by that refusal to co-operate."

"What! do you think —"

"I think that this affair is risky; if it succeeds, the government, arms folded, will reap the benefit. But

if on the contrary we fail, it will not take a share in the defeat. But you may be sure of this, for I know Rastignac well: without seeming to know anything, and without compromising himself in any way, he will help us, and perhaps more usefully than by open connivance. Think! did he say a single word on the morality of the affair? Did n't he say, again and again, 'I don't oppose — I have no right to prevent'? And as to the venom of the case, the only fault he found was that it was n't sure to kill. But in truth, my dear monsieur, this is going to be a hard pull, and we shall want all the cleverness of that fellow Desroches to get us through."

"Then you think I had better see him?"

"Better see him! why, my good friend, you ought to go to him at once."

"Would n't it be better if he talked with you?"

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed Vinet. "I may be the man to put the question in the Chamber; and if Desroches were seen with me, I should lose my virginity."

So saying, he took leave of Maxime with some haste, on the ground that he ought then to be at the Chamber.

"But I," said Maxime, running after him, — "suppose I wanted to consult you in the matter?"

"I leave to-night for my district, to get things into order before the opening of the new session."

"But about bringing up the question which you say may devolve on you?"

"I or another. I will hasten back as soon as I can; but you understand, I must put my department in order for a six months' absence."

“A good journey to you, then, Monsieur le procureur-général,” replied Maxime, sarcastically.

Left to himself, Monsieur de Trailles had a period of discouragement, resulting from the discovery that these two political Bertrands meant that his paw should pull the chestnuts from the fire. Rastignac’s behavior particularly galled him. His mind went back to their first interview at Madame Restaud’s, twenty years earlier, when he himself held the sceptre of fashion, and Rastignac, a poor student, neither knew how to come into a room nor how to leave it. [See “Père Goriot.”] And now Rastignac was peer of France and minister, while he, Maxime, become his agent, was obliged with folded arms to hear himself told that his plot was weak and he must carry it out alone, if at all.

But this discouragement did not last.

“Yes!” he cried to himself, “I *will* carry it out; my instinct tells me there is something in it. What nonsense!—a Dorlange, a nobody, to attempt to checkmate Maxime de Trailles and make a stepping-stone of my defeat! To my solicitor’s,” he said to the coachman, opening the door of the carriage himself.

Desroches was at home; and Monsieur de Trailles was immediately admitted to his study.

Desroches was a lawyer who had had, like Raffaele, several manners. First, possessor of a practice without clients, he had made fish of every case that came into his net; and he felt himself, in consequence, little respected by the court. But he was a hard worker, well versed in all the ins and outs of chicanery, a keen observer, and an intelligent reader of the movements of



the human heart. Consequently he had made for himself, in course of time, a very good practice; he had married a rich woman, and the moment that he thought himself able to do without crooked ways he had seriously renounced them. In 1839 Desroches had become an honest and skilful solicitor: that is to say, he assumed the interests of his clients with warmth and ability; he never counselled an openly dishonorable proceeding, still less would he have lent a hand to it. As to that fine flower of delicacy to be met with in Derville and some others like him, besides the sad fact that it is difficult to keep its fragrance from evaporating in this business world of which Monsieur de Talleyrand says, "Business means getting the property of others," it is certain that it can never be added to any second state of existence. The loss of that bloom of the soul, like that of other virginities, is irreparable. Desroches had not aspired to restore it to himself. He no longer risked anything ignoble or dishonest, but the good tricks admitted by the code of procedure, the good traps, the good treacheries which could be legitimately played off upon an adversary, he was very ready to undertake.

Desroches was moreover a man of parts and witty; loving the pleasures of the table, and like all men perpetually the slaves of imperious toil, he felt the need of vigorous amusement, taken on the wing and highly spiced. While purifying after a fashion his judicial life, he still continued the legal adviser of artists, men of letters, actresses, courtesans, and elegant bohemians like Maxime de Trailles, because he liked to live their life; they were sympathetic to him

as he to them. Their witty *argot*, their easy morals, their rather loose adventures, their expedients, their brave and honorable toil, in a word, their greatness and their weakness, — he understood it all marvellously well; and, like an ever-indulgent providence, he lent them his aid whenever they asked for it. But in order to conceal from his dignified and more valuable clients whatever might be compromising in the *clientèle* he really preferred, Desroches had his days of domesticity when he was husband and father, especially on Sundays. He appeared in the Bois de Boulogne in a modest calèche beside his wife (whose ugliness revealed the size of her *dot*), with three children on the front seat, who were luckless enough to resemble their mother. This family picture, these virtuous dominical habits, recalled so little the week-day Desroches, dining in cafés with all the male and female *viveurs* of renown, that one of them, Malaga, a circus-rider, famous for her wit and vim, remarked that lawyers ought not to be allowed to masquerade in that way and deceive the public with fictitious family joys.

It was to this relative integrity that de Trailles now went for counsel, as he never failed to do in all the many difficulties he encountered in life. Following a good habit, Desroches listened, without interrupting, to the long explanation of the case submitted to him. As Maxime hid nothing from this species of confessor, he gave his reasons for wishing to injure Salleneuve, representing him, in all good faith, as having usurped the name under which he was elected to the Chamber, — his hatred making him take the possibility for positive evidence.

In his heart, Desroches did not wish to take charge of an affair in which he saw not the slightest chance of success; but he showed his lax integrity by talking over the affair with his client as if it were an ordinary case of legal practice, instead of telling him frankly his opinion that this pretended "case" was a mere intrigue. The number of things done in the domain of evil by connivance in speech, without proceeding to the actual collusion of action, are incalculable.

"In the first place," said Desroches, when the matter was all explained, "a civil suit is not to be thought of. Your Romilly peasant-woman might have her hands full of proofs, but she has no ground herself to stand upon; she has no legal interest in contesting the rights of this recognized natural son."

"Yes, that is what Vinet said just now."

"As for the criminal case, you could, no doubt, compel it by giving information to the police authorities of this alleged imposture —"

"Vinet," interrupted Maxime, "inclined to the criminal proceeding."

"Yes, but there are a great many objections to it. In the first place, in order that the complaint be received at all, you must produce a certain amount of proof; then, supposing it is received, and the authorities are determined to pursue the case, you must have more evidence of criminality than you have now; and, moreover, supposing that you can show that the so-called Marquis de Sallenaube committed a fraud, how will you prove that the so-called son was privy to it? He might have been the dupe of some political schemer."

"But what interest could such a schemer have in giving Dorlange the many advantages he has derived from the recognition?"

"Ah! my dear fellow, in political matters all queer proceedings are possible; there is no such fertile source for compilers of *causes célèbres* and novelists. In the eyes of the law, you must remember, the counterfeiting of a person is not always a crime."

"How so?" asked Maxime.

"Here," said Desroches, taking up the Five Codes; "do me the favor to read Article 5 of the Penal Code, the only one which gives an opening to the case you have in mind."

Maxime read aloud the article, which was as follows:—

" 'Any functionary or public officer who, in the exercise of his functions, shall commit forgery — either by false signatures, by alteration of deeds, writings, or signatures, or by counterfeiting persons — ' There, you see," said Maxime, interrupting himself, — "by counterfeiting persons — ' "

"Go on," insisted Desroches.

" ' — by counterfeiting persons,' " resumed de Trailles, " 'either by writings made or intercalated in the public records or other documents, shall be punished by imprisonment at hard labor for life.' "

Maxime lingered lovingly on the last words, which gave his revenge a foretaste of the fate that awaited Salleneuve.

"My dear count," said Desroches, "you do as the barristers do; they read to the jury only so much of a legal document as suits their point of view. You pay

no attention to the fact that the only persons affected by this article are *functionaries* or *public officers*."

Maxime re-read the article, and convinced himself of the truth of that remark.

"But," he objected, "there must be something elsewhere about such a crime when committed by private individuals."

"No, there is not; you can trust my knowledge of jurisprudence, — the Code is absolutely silent in that direction."

"Then the crime we wish to denounce can be committed with impunity?"

"Its repression is always doubtful," replied Desroches. "Judges do sometimes make up for the deficiency of the Code in this respect. Here," he added, turning over the leaves of a book of reference, — "here are two decisions of the court of assizes, reported in Carnot's Commentary on the Penal Code: one of July 7, 1814, the other April 24, 1818, — both confirmed by the court of appeals, which condemn for forgery, by 'counterfeiting persons,' individuals who were neither functionaries nor public officers: but these decisions, unique in law, rest on the authority of an article in which the crime they punish is not even mentioned; and it is only by elaborate reasoning that they contrived to make this irregular application of it. You can understand, therefore, how very doubtful the issue of such a case would be, because in the absence of positive rule you can never tell how the magistrates might decide."

"Consequently, your opinion, like Rastignac's, is that we had better send our peasant-woman back to Romilly and drop the whole matter?"

"There is always something to be done if one knows how to set about it," replied Desroches. "There is a point that neither you nor Rastignac nor Vinet seems to have thought of; and that is, to proceed in a criminal case against a member of the national representation, except for flagrant crime, requires the consent and authority of the Chamber."

"True," said Maxime, "but I don't see how a new difficulty is going to help us."

"You would n't be sorry to send your adversary to the galleys," said Desroches, laughing.

"A villain," added Maxime, "who may make me lose a rich marriage; a fellow who poses for stern virtue, and then proceeds to trickery of this kind!"

"Well, you must resign yourself to a less glorious result; but you can make a pretty scandal, and destroy the reputation of your man; and that ought, it seems to me, to serve your ends."

"Of course, — better that than nothing."

"Well, then, here 's what I advise. Don't let your peasant-woman lodge her complaint before the criminal court, but make her place in the hands of the president of the Chamber of deputies a simple request for permission to proceed. Probably the permission will not be granted, and the affair will have to stop at that stage; but the matter being once made known will circulate through the Chambers, the newspapers will get hold of it and make a stir, and the ministry, *sub rosa*, can envenom the vague accusation through its friends."

"*Parbleu!* my dear fellow," cried Maxime, delighted to find a way open to his hatred, "you've a

strong head, — stronger than that of these so-called statesmen. But this request for permission addressed to the president of the Chamber, who is to draw it up?"

"Oh! not I," said Desroches, who did not wish to mix himself up any farther in this low intrigue. "It is n't legal assistance that you want; this is simply firing your first gun, and I don't undertake that business. But you can find plenty of briefless barristers always ready to put their finger in the political pie. Massol, for instance, can draw it up admirably. But you must not tell him that the idea came from me."

"Oh! as for that," said Maxime, "I'll take it all on my own shoulders. Perhaps in this form Rastignac may come round to the project."

"Yes, but take care you don't make an enemy of Vinet, who will think you very impertinent to have an idea which ought, naturally, to have come into the head of so great a parliamentary tactician as himself."

"Well, before long," said Maxime, rising, "I hope to bring the Vinets and Rastignacs, and others like them, to heel. Where do you dine this evening?" he added.

That is a question which men about town often address to each other.

"In a cave," replied Desroches, "with a band."

"Where 's that?"

"I suppose, in the course of your erotic existence, you have had recourse to the good offices of a certain Madame de Saint-Estève?"

"No," replied Maxime, "I have always done my own business in that line."

"True," said Desroches, "you conquer in the upper

ranks, where, as a general thing, they don't use go-betweens. But, at any rate, you have heard of Madame de Saint-Estève?"

"Of course; her establishment is in the rue Neuve-Saint-Marc, and it was she who got that pot of money out of Nucingen for La Torpille. Isn't she some relation to the chief of the detective police, who bears the same name, and used to be one of the same kind as herself?"

"I don't know about that," said Desroches, "but what I can tell you is that in her business as procuress — as it was called in days less decorous than our own — the worthy woman has made a fortune, and now, without any serious change of occupation, she lives magnificently in the rue de Provence, where she carries on the business of a matrimonial agency."

"Is that where you are going to dine?" asked Maxime.

"Yes, with the director of the London opera-house, Émile Blondet, Finot, Lousteau, Félicien Vernon, Théodore Gaillard, Hector Merlin, and Bixiou, who was commissioned to invite me, as it seems they are in want of my *experience* and *capacity* for business!"

"*Ah ça!* then there's some financial object in this dinner?"

"No; it merely concerns a theatrical venture, — the engagement of a prima donna; and they want to submit the terms of the contract to my judgment. You understand that the rest of the guests are invited to trumpet the affair as soon as the papers are signed."

"Who is the object of all this preparation?"

"Oh! a *star*, — destined, they say, to European



success; an Italian, discovered by a Swedish nobleman, Comte Halphertius, through the medium of Madame de Saint-Estève. The illustrious manager of the London opera-house is negotiating this treaty in order that she shall make her first appearance at his theatre."

"Well, adieu, my dear fellow; a pleasant dinner," said Maxime, preparing to depart. "If your star shines in London, it will probably appear in our firmament next winter. As for me, I must go and attend to the sunrise in Arcis. By the bye, where does Massol live?"

"Faith! I could n't tell you that. I never myself trust him with a case, for I will not employ barristers who dabble in politics. But you can get his address from the '*Gazette des Tribunaux*;' he is one of their reporters."

Maxime went to the office of that newspaper; but, probably on account of creditors, the office servant had express orders not to give the barrister's address, so that, in spite of his arrogant, imperious manner, Monsieur de Trailles obtained no information. Happily, he bethought him that he frequently saw Massol at the Opera, and he resolved to seek him there that evening. Before going to dinner, he went to the lodgings in the rue Montmartre, where he had installed the Romilly peasant-woman and her counsel, whom Madame Beauvisage had already sent to Paris. He found them at dinner, making the most of the Beauvisage funds, and he gave them an order to come to his apartment the next day at half-past eleven without breakfasting.

In the evening he found Massol, as he expected, at the opera-house. Going up to the lawyer with the slightly insolent manner which was natural to him, he said, —

“Monsieur, I have an affair, half legal, half political, which I desire to talk over with you. If it did not demand a certain amount of secrecy, I would go to your office, but I think we could talk with more safety in my own apartment; where, moreover, I shall be able to put you in communication with other persons concerned in the affair. May I hope that to-morrow morning, at eleven o’clock, you will do me the favor to take a cup of tea with me?”

If Massol had had an office, he might possibly not have consented, for the sake of his legal dignity, to reverse the usual order of things; but as he perched rather than lodged in any particular place, he was glad of an arrangement which left his abode, if he had any, incognito.

“I shall have the honor to be with you at the hour named,” he replied ceremoniously.

“Rue Pigalle,” said Maxime, “No. 6.”

“Yes, I know,” returned Massol, — “a few steps from the corner of the rue de la Rochefoucauld.”

## VIII.

## SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

A FEW evenings after the one on which Sallenuve and Marie-Gaston had taken Jacques Bricheteau to Saint-Sulpice to hear the Signora Luigia's voice, the church was the scene of a curious little incident that passed almost wholly unperceived. A young man entered hastily by a side-door; he seemed agitated, and so absorbed in some anxiety that he forgot to remove his hat. The beadle caught him by the arm, and his face became livid, but, turning round, he saw at once that his fears were causeless.

"Is your hat glued on your head, young man?" said the beadle, pompously.

"Oh, pardon me, monsieur," he replied, snatching it off; "I forgot myself."

Then he slipped into the thickest of the crowd and disappeared.

A few seconds after the irruption of this youth the same door gave access to a man around whose powerful, seamed face was the collar of a white beard, which, combined with a thick shock of hair, also white but slightly reddish in tone and falling almost to his shoulders, gave him very much the air of an old Conventional, or a Bernardin de Saint-Pierre who had had the small-pox. His face and his hair placed him in the sixties, but his robust figure, the energetic decision

of his movements, and, above all, the piercing keenness of the glance which he cast about him on entering the church, showed a powerful organization on which the passage of years had made little or no impression. No doubt, he was in search of the young fellow who had preceded him; but he did not commit the mistake of entering the crowd, where he knew of course that the youth had lost himself. Like a practised hunter, he saw that pursuit was useless, and he was just about to leave the church when, after a short organ prelude, the contralto of the signora delivering its solemn notes gave forth that glorious harmony to which is sung the Litany of the Virgin. The beauty of the voice, the beauty of the chant, the beauty of the words of the sacred hymn, which the fine method of the singer brought out distinctly, made a singular impression on the stalwart stranger. Instead of leaving the church, he put himself in the shadow of a column, against which he leaned as he stood; but as the last notes of the divine canticle died away among the arches of the church, he knelt on the pavement, and whoever had chanced to look that way would have seen two heavy tears rolling slowly down his cheeks. The benediction given, and the crowd dispersing, he rose, wiped his eyes, and, muttering, "What a fool I am!" left the church. Then he went to the Place Saint-Sulpice, and, beckoning to a coach on the stand, he said to the driver, —

"Rue de Provence, my man, quick! there's fat in it."

Reaching the house, he went rapidly up the stairway, and rang at the door of an apartment on the first floor.

“Is my aunt at home?” he inquired of the negro who opened it. Then he followed the man, and was presently ushered into a salon where the negro announced, —

“Monsieur de Saint-Estève.”

The salon which the famous chief of the detective police now entered was remarkable for the luxury, but still more for the horribly bad taste, of its appointments. Three women of advanced age were seated round a card-table earnestly employed in a game of dominoes. Three glasses and an empty silver bowl which gave forth a vinous odor showed that the worship of double-sixes was not without its due libations.

“Good-evening, mesdames,” said the chief of police, sitting down; “for I have something to say to each of you.”

“We’ll listen presently,” said his aunt; “you can’t interrupt the game. It won’t be long; I play for four.”

“White all round!” said one of the hags.

“Domino!” cried the Saint-Estève. “I win; you have four points between you two, and the whites are all out. Well, my dear, what is it?” she said, turning to her nephew, after a rather stormy reckoning among the witches was over.

“You, Madame Fontaine,” said the chief of police, addressing one of the venerable beings, whose head was covered with disorderly gray hair and a battered green bonnet, — “you neglect your duty; you have sent me no report, and, on the contrary, I get many complaints of you. The prefect has a great mind to close your establishment. I protect you on account of the

services you are supposed to render us; but if you don't render them, I warn you, without claiming any gifts of prediction, that your fate-shop will be shut up."

"There now!" replied the pythoness, "you prevented me from hiring Mademoiselle Lenormand's apartment in the rue de Tournon, and how can you expect me to make reports about the cooks and clerks and workmen and grisettes who are all I get where I am? If you had let me work among the great folks, I'd make you reports and plenty of them."

"I don't see how you can say that, Madame Fontaine," said Madame de Saint-Estève. "I am sure I send you all my clients. It was only the other day," continued the matrimonial agent, "I sent you that Italian singer, living with a deputy who is against the government; why did n't you report about that?"

"There's another thing," said the chief of police, "which appears in several of the complaints that I received about you, — that nasty animal —"

"What, Astaroth?" said Madame Fontaine.

"Yes, that batrachian, that toad, to come down to his right name. It seems he nearly killed a woman who was pregnant —"

"Well, well," interrupted the sorceress, "if I am to tell fortunes alone, you might as well guillotine me at once. Because a fool of a woman lay-in with a dead child, must toads be suppressed in nature? Why did God make them?"

"My dear woman," said the chief, "did you never hear that in 1617 a learned man was put to death for having a toad in a bottle?"

"Yes, I know that; but we are not in those light ages," replied Madame Fontaine, facetiously.

"As for you, Madame Nourrisson, the complaint is that you gather your fruit unripe. You ought to know by this time the laws and regulations, and I warn you that everything under twenty-one years of age is forbidden. I wonder I have to remind you of it. Now, aunt, what I have to say to you is confidential."

Thus dismissed, two of the Fates departed.

Since the days when Jacques Collin had abdicated his former kingship and had made himself, as they say, a new skin in the police force, Jacqueline Collin, though she had never put herself within reach of the law, had certainly never donned the robe of innocence. But having attained, like her nephew, to what might fairly be called opulence, she kept at a safe and respectful distance from the Penal Code, and under cover of an agency that was fairly avowable, she sheltered practices more or less shady, on which she continued to bestow an intelligence and an activity that were really infernal.

"Aunt," said Vautrin, "I have so many things to say to you that I don't know where to begin."

"I should think so! It is a week since I've seen you."

"In the first place, I must tell you that I have just missed a splendid chance."

"What sort of chance?" asked Jacqueline.

"In the line of my odious calling. But this time the capture was worth making. Do you remember that little Prussian engraver about whom I sent you to Berlin?"

"The one who forged those Vienna bank bills in that wonderful way?"

“Yes. I just missed arresting him near Saint-Sulpice. But I followed him into the church, where I heard your Signora Luigia.”

“Ah!” said Jacqueline, “she has made up her mind at last, and has left that imbecile of a sculptor.”

“It is about her that I have come to talk to you,” said Vautrin. “Here are the facts. The Italian opera season in London has begun badly, — their prima donna is taken ill. Sir Francis Drake, the impresario, arrived in Paris yesterday, at the Hôtel des Princes, rue de Richelieu, in search of a prima donna, at any rate *pro tem*. I have been to see him in the interests of the signora. Sir Francis Drake is an Englishman, very bald, with a red nose, and long yellow teeth. He received me with cold politeness, and asked in very good French what my business was.”

“Did you propose to him Luigia?”

“That was what I went for, — in the character, be it understood, of a Swedish nobleman. He asked if her talent was known. ‘Absolutely unknown,’ I replied. ‘It is risky,’ said Sir Francis; ‘nevertheless arrange to let me hear her.’ I told him that she was staying with her friend Madame de Saint-Estève, at whose house I could take the liberty to invite him to dinner.”

“When?” asked Jacqueline.

“To-day is the 19th; I said the 21st. Order the dinner from Chevet for fifteen persons, and send for your client Bixiou to make you out the list. Tell him you want the chief men of the press, a lawyer to settle the terms of the contract, and a pianist to accompany the signora. Let her know what hangs upon it. Sir



Francis Drake and I will make up the number. Useless to tell you that I am your friend Comte Halphertius, who, having no house in Paris, gives this dinner at yours. Mind that everything is done in the best taste."

In designating Bixiou to his aunt as the recruiting-officer of the dinner, Vautrin knew that through the universality of his relations with writing, singing, designing, eating, living, and squirming Paris, no one was as capable as he of spreading the news of the dinner broadcast.

At seven o'clock precisely all the guests named by Desroches to Maxime, plus Desroches himself, were assembled in the salon of the rue de Provence, when the negro footman opened the door and announced Sir Francis Drake and his Excellency the Comte Halphertius. The dress of the Swedish nobleman was correct to the last degree, — black coat, white cravat, and white waistcoat, on which glowed the ribbon of an order hanging from his neck; the rest of his decorations were fastened to his coat by chainlets. At the first glance which he cast upon the company, Vautrin had the annoyance of beholding that Jacqueline's habits and instincts had been more potent than his express order, — for a species of green and yellow turban surmounted her head in a manner which he felt to be ridiculous; but thanks to the admirable manner in which the rest of his programme had been carried out, the luckless coiffure was forgiven.

As for Signora Luigia, dressed in black, which was customary with her, and having had the good sense to reject the services of a *coiffeur*, she was royally beauti-

ful. An air of melancholy gravity, expressed by her whole person, inspired a sentiment of respect which surprised the men who on Bixiou's invitation were there to judge of her. The only special presentation that was made among the guests was that of Desroches to Vautrin, which Bixiou made in the following lively formula: —

“Maitre Desroches, the most intelligent solicitor of modern times — Comte Halphertius of Sweden.”

As for Sir Francis Drake, he seemed at first inclined to disdain the influence of the dramatic newspapers, whose representatives were there assembled; but presently recognizing Félicien Vernou and Lousteau, two noted men of that secondary press, he greeted them heartily and shook them by the hand.

Before dinner was announced, Comte Halphertius judged it advisable to make a little speech.

“Dear madame,” he said to his aunt, “you are really a fairy godmother. This is the first time I have ever been in a Parisian salon, and here you have assembled to meet me all that literature, the arts, and the legal profession can offer of their best. I, who am only a northern barbarian, — though our country, too, can boast of its celebrities, — Linnæus, Berzelius, Thorwaldsen, Tegner, Franzen, Geier, and the charming novelist Frederika Bremer, — I find myself a cipher in such company.”

“But in Bernadotte France and Sweden clasped hands,” replied Madame de Saint-Estève, whose historical erudition went as far as that.

“It is very certain,” said Vautrin, “that our beloved sovereign, Charles XIV. — ”

The announcement of dinner by a majordomo, who threw open the double doors of the salon, put an end to this remark. Jacqueline took Vautrin's arm, saying in a whisper as they walked along, —

“Have I done things all right?”

“Yes,” replied Vautrin, “it is all in good style, except that devil of a turban of yours, which makes you look like a poll-parrot.”

“Why, no,” said Jacqueline, “not at all; with my Javanese face” (she was born on the island of Java), “oriental things set me off.”

Madame de Saint-Estève placed Sir Francis Drake upon her right, and Desroches at her left; Vautrin sat opposite, flanked on either side by Émile Blondet, of the “*Débats*,” and the Signora Luigia; the rest of the company placed themselves as they pleased. The dinner, on the whole, was dull; Bixiou, at Madame de Saint-Estève's request, had warned his party to risk nothing that might offend the chaste ears of the pious Italian. Forced to mind their morals, as a celebrated critic once observed, these men of wit and audacity lost their spirit; and, taking refuge in the menu, which was excellent, they either talked together in a low voice, or let the conversation drag itself along in bourgeois commonplaces. They ate and they drank, but they did not dine. Bixiou, incapable of bearing this state of things during a whole dinner, determined to create a reaction. The appearance of this Swedish magnate, evidently on intimate terms with the Saint-Estève, puzzled him. He noticed a certain insufficiency in Vautrin, and thought to himself that if he were really a great nobleman, he would be more equal to

the occasion, and give a tone to the feast. He determined, therefore, to test him, and thus provide amusement, at any rate, for himself. So, at the end of the second course, he suddenly said from his end of the table, —

“Monsieur le comte, you are too young, of course, to have known Gustavus III., whom Scribe and Auber have set in opera, while the rest of us glorify him in a *galop*.”

“I beg your pardon,” replied Vautrin, jumping at the chance thus given him, “I am nearly sixty years of age, which makes me thirteen in 1792, when our beloved sovereign was killed by the assassin Ankarstroem, so that I can well remember that period.”

Thus, by means of a little volume entitled “*Characters and Anecdotes of the Court of Sweden*,” printed in 1808, and bought on the quays in the interests of his Swedish incarnation, the chief of the detective police evaded the trap. He did better. The faucet being opened, he poured forth such an abundance of erudition and detailed circumstances, he related so many curious and secret anecdotes, especially relating to the *coup d'état* by which, in 1772, Gustavus III. had freed his crown, — in short, he was so precise and so interesting that as they left the table Émile Blondet said to Bixiou, —

“I thought, as you did, that a foreign count in the hands of a marriage agent was a very suspicious character; but he knows the court of Sweden in a way that it was quite impossible to get out of books. He is evidently a man well born; one might make some interesting articles out of the stories he has just told.”

“Yes,” said Bixiou, “and I mean to cultivate his acquaintance; I could make a good deal out of him in the *Charivari*.”

“You had better find out first,” said Desroches, “whether he has enough French humor to like being caricatured.”

Presently the first notes of the piano gave notice that the Signora Luigia was about to mount the breach. She first sang the romance in “Saul” with a depth of expression which moved the whole company, even though that areopagus of judges were digesting a good dinner, as to which they had not restrained themselves. Émile Blondet, who was more of a political thinker than a man of imagination, was completely carried away by his enthusiasm. As the song ended, Félicien Vernou and Lousteau went up to Sir Francis Drake and reproached him for wishing to take such a treasure from France, at the same time flattering him for his cleverness as an impresario.

La Luigia then sang an air from the “Nina” of Paësiello; and in that — the part being very dramatic — she showed a talent for comedy second only to her vocal gift. It was received with really genuine applause; but what assured and completed her success with these trained judges was her modesty and the sort of ignorance in which she still remained of her amazing talent, — in the midst, too, of praises which might have turned her head. Accustomed to frenzied self-love and the insolent pretensions of the veriest sparrow of the opera, these journalists were amazed and touched by the humility, the simplicity of this empress, who seemed quite astonished at the effect she produced.

The success of the trial passed all expectation. There was but one voice as to the desirability of immediately engaging her; and Sir Francis Drake, Vautrin, and Desroches presently passed into an adjoining room to draw up the terms of the contract. As soon as that was done, Vautrin returned to the salon for *la diva*, requesting her to hear the contract read and to affix her signature. Her departure for London without further delay was fixed for the following day in company with Sir Francis Drake.

A few days later the packet-boat from Boulogne conveyed to England another personage of this history. Jacques Bricheteau, having obtained Sallenaue's present address from Madame de l'Estorade, and considering the danger which threatened the new deputy extremely urgent, determined not to write, but to go himself to England and confer with him in person. When he reached London, he was surprised to learn that Hanwell was the most celebrated insane asylum in Great Britain. Had he reflected on the mental condition of Marie-Gaston, he might have guessed the truth. As it was, he felt completely bewildered; but not committing the blunder of losing his time in useless conjectures, he went on without a moment's delay to Hanwell, which establishment is only about nine miles from London, pleasantly situated at the foot of a hill on the borders of Middlesex and Surrey.

After a long detention in the waiting-room, he was at last enabled to see his friend at a moment when Marie-Gaston's insanity, which for several days had been in the stages of mania, was yielding to the care of the doctor, and showed some symptoms of a prob-

able recovery. As soon as Sallenaue was alone with the organist, he inquired the reason that led him to follow him; and he heard, with some emotion, the news of the intrigue which Maxime de Trailles had apparently organized against him. Returning to his original suspicions, he said to Jacques Bricheteau, —

“Are you really sure that that person who declared himself my father was the Marquis de Sallenaue, and that I am truly his son?”

“Mother Marie-des-Anges and Antoine Pigoult, by whom I was warned of this plot, have no more doubt than I have of the existence of the Marquis de Sallenaue; this gossip with which they threaten you has, in my judgment, but one dangerous aspect. I mean that by your absence you are giving a free field to your adversaries.”

“But,” replied the deputy, “the Chamber would not condemn me without a hearing. I wrote to the president and asked for leave of absence, and I took the precaution to request de l’Estorade, who knows the reason of my absence, to be kind enough to guarantee me, should my absence be called in question.”

“I think you also wrote to Madame de l’Estorade, did n’t you?”

“I wrote only to her,” replied Sallenaue. “I wanted to tell her about the great misfortune of our mutual friend, and, at the same time, I asked her to explain to her husband the kind service I requested him to do for me.”

“If that is so,” said Bricheteau, “you need not count for one moment on the l’Estorades. A knowledge of this trick which is being organized against

you has reached their ears and affected their minds, I am very sure."

He then related the reception he had met with from Madame de l'Estorade, and the uncivil remarks she had made about Sallenaue, from which he concluded that in the struggle about to take place no assistance could be relied on from that direction.

"I have every reason to be surprised," said Sallenaue, "after the warm assurances Madame de l'Estorade has given me of an unfailing good-will. However," he added philosophically, "everything is possible in this world; and calumny has often undermined friendship."

"You understand, therefore," said Bricheteau, "that it is all-important to start for Paris, without a moment's delay. Your stay here, all things considered, is only relatively necessary."

"On the contrary," said Sallenaue, "the doctor considers that my presence here may be of the utmost utility. He has not yet let me see the patient, because he expects to produce some great result when I do see him."

"That is problematical," returned Jacques Bricheteau; "whereas by staying here you are compromising your political future and your reputation in the most positive manner. Such a sacrifice no friendship has the right to demand of you."

"Let us talk of it with the doctor," said Sallenaue, unable to deny the truth of what Bricheteau said.

On being questioned, the doctor replied that he had just seen symptoms in the patient which threatened another paroxysm.



"But," cried Sallenaue, eagerly, "you are not losing hope of a cure, are you, doctor?"

"Far from that. I have perfect faith in the ultimate termination of the case; but I see more delay in reaching it than at first I expected," replied the doctor.

"I have recently been elected to our Chamber of deputies," said Sallenaue, "and I ought to be in my seat at the opening of the session; in fact, my interests are seriously concerned, and my friend Monsieur Bricheteau has come over to fetch me. If therefore I can be sure that my presence here is not essential —"

"By all means, go," said the doctor. "It may be a long time before I could allow you to see the patient; therefore you can leave without the slightest self-reproach. In fact, you can really do nothing here at present. Trust him to Lord Lewin and me; I assure you that I shall make his recovery, of which I have no doubt, a matter of personal pride and self-love."

Sallenaue pressed the doctor's hand gratefully, and started for London without delay. Arriving there at five o'clock, the travellers were unable to leave before midnight; meantime their eyes were struck at every turn by those enormous posters which English *puffism* alone is able to produce, announcing the second appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre of the Signora Luigia. The name alone was enough to attract the attention of both travellers; but the newspapers to which they had recourse for further information furnished, as is customary in England, so many circumstantial details about the prima donna that Sallenaue could no longer doubt the transformation of

his late housekeeper into an operatic star of the first magnitude.

Going to the box-office, which he found closed, every seat having been sold before mid-day, Sallenaue considered himself lucky to obtain two seats from a speculator, at the enormous cost of five pounds apiece. The opera was "*La Pazza d'Amore*" of Paësiello. When the curtain rose, Sallenaue, who had spent the last two weeks at Hanwell, among the insane, could all the more appreciate the remarkable dramatic talent his late housekeeper displayed in the part of Nina. Even Bricheteau, although annoyed at Sallenaue's determination to be present, was so carried away by the power of the singer that he said to his companion rather imprudently, —

"Politics have no such triumphs as that. Art alone is deity —"

"And Luigia is its prophet!" added Sallenaue.

Never, perhaps, had the Italian opera-house in London presented a more brilliant sight; the whole audience was in a transport of enthusiasm, and bouquets fairly rained upon the stage.

As they left the theatre, Bricheteau looked at his watch; it was a quarter to eleven; they had thus ample time to take the steamer leaving, as the tide served, at midnight. But when the organist turned to make this remark to Sallenaue, who was behind him, he saw nothing of his man; the deputy had vanished!

Ten minutes later the maid of the Signora Luigia entered her mistress's dressing-room, which was filled with distinguished Englishmen presented by Sir

Francis Drake to the new star, and gave her a card. On reading the name the prima donna turned pale and whispered a few words to the waiting-woman; then she seemed so anxious to be rid of the crowd who were pressing round her that her budding adorers were inclined to be angry. But a great singer has rare privileges, and the fatigue of the part into which the *diva* had just put so much soul seemed so good an excuse for her sulkiness that her court dispersed without much murmuring.

Left alone, the signora rapidly resumed her usual dress, and the directors' carriage took her back to the hotel where she had stayed since arriving in London. On entering her *salon* she found Sallenaue, who had preceded her.

"You in London, monsieur!" she said; "it is like a dream!"

"Especially to me," replied Sallenaue, "who find you here, after searching hopelessly for you in Paris —"

"Did you take that pains? — why?"

"You left me in so strange a manner, and your nature is so rash, you knew so little of Paris, and so many dangers might threaten your inexperience, that I feared for you."

"Suppose harm did happen to me; I was neither your wife, nor your sister, nor your mistress; I was only your —"

"I thought," said Sallenaue, hastily, "that you were my friend."

"I was — under obligation to you," she replied. "I saw that I was becoming an embarrassment in

your new situation. What else could I do but release you from it?"

"Who told you that you were an embarrassment to me? Have I ever said or intimated anything of the kind? Could I not speak to you, as I did, about your future professional life without wounding so deeply your sensibility?"

"People feel things as they feel them," replied Luigia. "I had the inward consciousness that you would rather I were out of your house than in it. My future you had already given me the means to secure; you see for yourself it is opening in a manner that ought to reassure you."

"It seems to me so brilliant that I hope you will not think me indiscreet if I ask whose hand, more fortunate than mine, has produced this happy result."

"That of a great Swedish nobleman," replied Luigia, without hesitation. "Or rather, I should say, as the friend of a lady who took an interest in me, he procured me an engagement at Her Majesty's Theatre; the kind encouragement of the public has done the rest."

"Say, rather, your own talent; I was present at the performance this evening."

Making him a coquettish courtesy, Luigia said, —

"I hope you were satisfied with your humble servant."

"Your musical powers did not surprise me, for those I knew already; but those transports of dramatic passion, your powerful acting, so sure of itself, did certainly astonish me."

"It comes from having suffered much," replied Luigia; "suffering is a great teacher."

"Suffered? Yes, I know you did, in Italy. But I have liked to feel that after your arrival in France —"

"Always; I have always suffered," she said in a voice of emotion. "I was not born under a happy star."

"That 'always' seems like a reproach to me," said Salleneuve, "and yet I do not know what wrong I can have done you."

"You have done me no wrong; the harm was there!" she cried, striking her breast, — "within me!"

"Probably some foolish fancy, such as that of leaving my house suddenly, because your mistaken sense of honor made you think yourself in my way."

"Not mistaken," she replied. "I know what was in your thoughts. If only on account of what you had done for me, I knew I could never aspire to your esteem."

"But, my dear Luigia, I call such ideas absurd. Have I ever shown you any want of consideration? How could I? Your conduct has always been exemplary."

"Yes, I tried to do everything that would give you a good opinion of me; but I was none the less the widow of Benedetto."

"What! can you suppose that that misfortune, the result of a just vengeance —"

"Ah! no, it is not the death of that man that lowered me in your eyes; on the contrary. But I had been the wife of a buffoon, of a police-spy, of a base man, ready to sell me to any one who would give him money."

"As long as that situation lasted, I thought you deeply to be pitied; but despised, never!"

"And," continued the Italian, more excitedly, "we had lived two years under the same roof, you and I alone."

"Yes, and I found my comfort in it."

"Did you think me ugly?"

"You know better than that, for I made my finest statue from you."

"Foolish?"

"No one was ever foolish who could act such a part as you did to-night."

"Then you must see that you despised me."

Sallenaue seemed wholly surprised by this deduction; he thought himself very clever in replying, —

"It seems to me that if I had behaved to you in any other manner you would have the right to say that I despised you."

But he had to do with a woman who in everything, in her friendships, her hatreds, her actions, as in her words, went straight to her point. As if she feared not to be fully understood, she went on: —

"To-day, monsieur, I can tell you all, for I speak of the past; the future has opened before me, as you see. From the day you were good to me and by your generous protection I escaped an infamous outrage, my heart has been wholly yours."

Sallenaue, who had never suspected that feeling, and, above all, was unable to understand how so artlessly crude an avowal of it could be made, knew not what to answer.

"I was not ignorant," continued the strange woman, "that I should have difficulty in rising from the degradation in which I appeared to you at our first meeting.

If, at the time you consented to take me with you to Paris, I had seen you incline to treat me with gallantry, had you shown any sign of turning to your profit the dangerous situation in which I had placed myself, my heart would instantly have retired; you would have seemed to me an ordinary man — ”

“So,” remarked Sallenauve, “to love you would have been insulting; not to love you was cruel! What sort of woman are you, that either way you are displeased?”

“You ought not to have loved me,” she replied, “while the mud was still on my skirts and you scarcely knew me; because then your love would have been the love of the eyes and not of the soul. But when, after two years passed beside you, you had seen by my conduct that I was an honorable woman; when, without ever accepting a pleasure, I devoted myself to the care of the house and your comfort without other relaxation than the study of my art; and when, above all, I sacrificed to you that modesty you had seen me defend with such energy, — then you were cruel not to comprehend, and never, never will your imagination tell you what I have suffered, and all the tears you have made me shed.”

“But, my dear Luigia, I was your host, and even had I suspected what you now reveal to me, my duty as an honorable man would have commanded me to see nothing of it, and to take no advantage of you.”

“Ah! that is not the reason; it is simpler than that. You saw nothing because your fancy turned elsewhere.”

“Well, and if it were so?”

"It ought not to be so," replied Luigia, vehemently. "That woman is not free; she has a husband and children, and though you did make a saint of her, I presume to say, ridiculous as it may seem, that she is not worth me!"

Sallenaue could not help smiling, but he answered very seriously, —

"You are totally mistaken as to your rival. Madame de l'Estorade was never anything to me but a model, without other value than the fact that she resembled another woman. That one I knew in Rome before I knew you. She had beauty, youth, and a glorious inclination for art. To-day she is confined in a convent; like you, she has paid her tribute to sorrow; therefore, you see —"

"What, three hearts devoted to you," cried Luigia, "and not one accepted? A strange star is yours! No doubt I suffer from its fatal influence, and therefore I must pardon you."

"You are good to be merciful; will you now let me ask you a question? Just now you spoke of your future, and I see it with my own eyes. Who are the friends who have suddenly advanced you so far and so splendidly in your career? Have you made any compact with the devil?"

"Perhaps," said Luigia, laughing.

"Don't laugh," said Sallenaue; "you chose to rush alone and unprotected into that hell called Paris, and I dread lest you have made some fatal acquaintance. I know the immense difficulties and the immense dangers that a woman placed as you are now must meet. Who is this lady that you spoke of? and



how did you ever meet her while living under my roof?"

"She is a pious and charitable woman, who came to see me during your absence at Arcis. She had noticed my voice at Saint-Sulpice, during the services of the Month of Mary, and she tried to entice me away to her own parish church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, — it was for that she came to see me."

"Tell me her name."

"Madame de Saint-Estève."

Though far from penetrating the many mysteries that surrounded Jacqueline Collin, Sallenaure knew Madame de Saint-Estève to be a woman of doubtful character and a matrimonial agent, having at times heard Bixiou tell tales of her.

"But that woman," he said, "has a shocking notoriety in Paris. She is an adventuress of the worst kind."

"I suspected it," said Luigia. "But what of that?"

"And the man to whom she introduced you?"

"He an adventurer? No, I think not. At any rate, he did me a great service."

"But he may have designs upon you."

"Yes, people may have designs upon me," replied Luigia, with dignity, "but they cannot execute them: between those designs and me, there is myself."

"But your reputation?"

"That was lost before I left your house. I was said to be your mistress; you had yourself to contradict that charge before the electoral college; you contradicted it, but you could not stop it."

"And my esteem, for which you profess to care?"

"I no longer want it. You did not love me when I wished for it; you shall not love me now that I no longer wish it."

"Who knows?" exclaimed Sallenaue.

"There are two reasons why it cannot be," said the singer. "In the first place, it is too late; and in the second, we are no longer on the same path."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I am an artist and you have ceased to be one. I rise; you fall."

"Do you call it falling to rise, perhaps, to the highest dignities of the State?"

"To whatever height you rise," said Luigia, passionately, "you will ever be below your past and the noble future that was once before you — Ah! stay; I think that I have lied to you; had you remained a sculptor, I believe I should have borne still longer your coldness and your disdain; I should have waited until I entered my vocation, until the halo round a singer's head might have shown you, at last, that I was there beside you. But on the day that you apostatized I would no longer continue my humiliating sacrifice. There is no future possible between us."

"Do you mean," said Sallenaue, holding out his hand, which she did not take, "that we cannot even be friends?"

"No, she replied; "all is over — past and gone." We shall hear of each other; and from afar, as we pass in life, we can wave our hands in recognition, but nothing further."

"So," said Sallenaue, sadly, "this is how it all ends!"

La Luigia looked at him a moment, her eyes shining with tears.

"Listen," she said in a resolute and sincere tone: "this is possible. I have loved you, and after you, no one can enter the heart you have despised. You will hear that I have lovers; believe it not; you will not believe it, remembering the woman that I am. But who knows? Later your life may be swept clean of the other sentiments that have stood in my way; the freedom, the strangeness of the avowal I have just made to you will remain in your memory, and then it is not impossible that after this long rejection you may end by desiring me. If that should happen, — if at the end of many sad deceptions you should return, in sheer remorse, to the religion of art, — then, then, supposing that long years have not made love ridiculous between us, remember this evening. Now, let us part; it is already too late for a *tête-à-tête*."

So saying, she took a light and passed into an inner room, leaving Sallenaue in a state of mind we can readily imagine after the various shocks and surprises of this interview.

On returning to his hotel he found Jacques Briche-teau awaiting him.

"Where the devil have you been?" cried the organist, impatiently. "It is too late now to take that steamboat."

"Well," said Sallenaue, carelessly, "then I shall have a few hours longer to play truant."

"But during that time your enemies are tunnelling their mine."

"I don't care. In that cave called political life one has to be ready for anything."

“I thought as much!” exclaimed Bricheteau. “You have been to see Luigia; her success has turned your head, and the deputy is thinking of his statues.”

“How often have I heard you say yourself that Art alone is great?”

“But an orator,” replied Bricheteau, “is also an artist, and the greatest of all. Others speak to the heart and the mind, but he to the conscience and the will of others. At any rate, this is no time to look back; you are engaged in a duel with your adversaries. Are you an honest man, or a scoundrel who has stolen a name? There is the question which may, in consequence of your absence, be answered against you in the Chamber.”

“I begin to feel that you have led me into a mistaken path; I had in my hands a treasure, and I have flung it away!”

“Happily,” said the organist, “that’s only an evening mist which the night will dissipate. To-morrow you will remember the engagement you are under to your father, and the great future which is before you.”

## IX.

## IN THE CHAMBER.

THE king had opened the Chamber, but Sallenaue was not present, and his absence was causing a certain sensation in the democratic ranks. The "National" was particularly disturbed. As a stockholder of the paper, coming frequently to its office before the election, and even consenting to write articles for it, how strange that on the eve of the opening of the session the newly elected deputy should not come near it !

"Now that he is elected," said some of the editorial staff, remarking on the total disappearance of the man whom they considered they had done their part to elect, "does monsieur think he can treat us scurvily? It is getting too much the habit of these lordly deputies to be very obsequious as long as they are candidates, and throw us away, after they have climbed the tree, like an old coat."

Less excitable, the editor-in-chief calmed this first ebullition, but Sallenaue's absence from the royal session seemed to him very strange.

The next day, when the bureaux are constituted, presidents and secretaries appointed, and committees named, Sallenaue's absence was still more marked. In the bureau for which his name was drawn, it happened that the election of its president depended on

one vote; through the absence of the deputy of Arcis, the ministry gained that advantage and the Opposition lost it. Much discontent was expressed by the newspapers of the latter party; they did not, as yet, openly attack the conduct of the defaulter, but they declared that they could not account for it.

Maxime de Trailles, on the other hand, fully prepared and on the watch, was waiting only until the routine business of the bureaux and the appointment of the committees was disposed of to send in the petition of the Romilly peasant-woman, which had been carefully drawn up by Massol, under whose clever pen the facts he was employed to make the most of assumed that degree of probability which barristers contrive to communicate to their sayings and affirmations. But when Maxime had the joy of seeing that Sallenaue's absence in itself was creating a prejudice against him, he went again to Rastignac and asked him if he did not think it better to hasten the moment of attack, since everything seemed so favorable.

This time Rastignac was much more explicit: Sallenaue's absence abroad seemed to him the conduct of a man who feared exposure and had lost his head. He therefore advised de Trailles to have the petition sent in at once, and he made no difficulty about promising his assistance to a conspiracy which appeared to be taking color, the result of which must be, in any case, a very pretty scandal. The next day the first trace of his subterranean influence was visible. The order of the day in the Chamber was the verification of powers, — that is, the admission of newly elected members. The deputy appointed to report on

the elections in the department of the Aube was a strong partisan of the ministry, and, in consequence of a confidential communication made to him that morning, the following paragraph appeared in his report: —

“The action of the electoral college of Arcis was regular. Monsieur de Sallenaue produced in proper time all the necessary papers proving his eligibility; his admission therefore would seem to present no difficulty. But rumors of a singular nature have been current since the election as to the name and identity of the new deputy; and, in support of these rumors, a petition to authorize a criminal prosecution has been laid before the president of the Chamber. This petition states an extremely serious fact, namely: that Monsieur de Sallenaue has usurped the name he bears; and this usurpation, being made by means of an official document, assumes the character of forgery committed by substitution of person. A most regrettable circumstance,” continued the report, “is the absence of Monsieur de Sallenaue, who instead of instantly contradicting the accusation made against him, has not appeared since the opening of the Chamber at any of its sessions, and it is not even known where he is. Under these circumstances, his admission, the committee think, cannot be granted; and they feel it therefore their duty to refer the matter to the Chamber.”

Daniel d’Arthèz, a deputy of the legitimist opposition, who had been favorable to the election of Sallenaue, hastened, after the reading of this report, to ask for the floor, and entreated the Chamber to remark that its adoption would be wholly unjustifiable.

“The point for the committee to decide,” he said, “was the regularity of the election. The report

distinctly states that this is not called in question. The Chamber can, therefore, do only one thing; namely, admit by an immediate vote the validity of an election about which no irregularity is alleged. To bring in the question of authorizing a criminal investigation would be an abuse of power; because by not allowing discussion or defence, and by dispensing with the usual forms of procedure which guarantee certain rights to a party implicated, the Chamber would be virtually rejecting the action of the electors in the exercise of their sovereign functions. Every one can see, moreover," added the orator, "that to grant the right of criminal investigation in this connection is to prejudge the merits of the case; the presumption of innocence, which is the right of every man, is ignored, — whereas in this case the person concerned is a man whose integrity has never been doubted, and who has just been openly honored by the suffrages of his fellow citizens."

The discussion was prolonged for some time, the ministerial orators, of course, taking the other side, until an unfortunate event occurred. The senior deputy, acting as president (for the Chamber was not yet constituted), was a worn-out old man, very absent-minded, and wholly unaccustomed to the functions which his age devolved upon him. He had duly received Monsieur de Sallenaue's letter requesting leave of absence; and had he recollected to communicate it, as in duty bound, to the Chamber at the proper time, the discussion would probably have been nipped in the bud. But parliamentary matters are apt to go haphazard; when, reminded of the letter by the discussion,



he produced it, and when the Chamber learned that the request for leave of absence was made for an indefinite period and for the vague purpose of "urgent affairs," the effect was lamentable.

"It is plain," said all the ministerial party, "that he has gone to England to escape an investigation; he feared the result; he feels himself unmasked."

This view, setting aside political prejudice, was shared by the sterner minds of all parties, who refused to conceive of a man not hastening to defend himself from such a blasting accusation. In short, after a very keen and able argument from the attorney-general, Vinet, who had taken heart on finding that the accused was likely to be condemned by default, the question of adjournment was put to the vote and passed, but by a very small majority; eight days being granted to the said deputy to appear and defend himself."

The day after this vote was passed Maxime de Trailles wrote to Madame Beauvisage as follows:—

MADAME, — The enemy received a severe check yesterday. In the opinion of my friend Rastignac, a very intelligent and experienced judge in parliamentary matters, Dorlange can never recover from the blow, no matter what may happen later. If we cannot succeed in producing positive proof to support the statement of our good peasant-woman, it is possible that this rascal, supposing always that he ventures to return to France, may be admitted to the Chamber. But if he is, he can only drag on a despised and miserable existence; he will be driven to resign, and then the election of Monsieur Beauvisage is beyond all doubt; for the electors, ashamed to have forsaken him for such a rascal, will be

only too glad to reinstate themselves in public opinion by the choice of an honorable man—who was, in fact, their first choice.

It is to your rare sagacity, madame, that this result is due; for without that species of second sight which showed you the chances hidden in the revelation of that woman, we should have missed our best weapon. I must tell you though you may think this vanity, that neither Rastignac nor the attorney-general, in spite of their great political acumen, perceived the true value of your discovery; and I myself, if I had not had the good fortune of your acquaintance, and thus been enabled to judge of the great value of all ideas emanating from you, even I might have shared the indifference of the two statesmen to the admirable weapon which you have placed in our hands. I have now succeeded in proving to Rastignac the shrewdness and perspicacity you have shown in this matter, and he sincerely admires you for them. Therefore, madame, when I have the happiness of belonging to you by the tie we proposed, I shall not have to initiate you into politics, for you have already found your way there.

Nothing further can take place for a week, which is the period of delay granted by the Chamber. If the defaulter does not then appear, I am confident his election will be annulled. You can easily believe that between now and then all my efforts will be given to increase the feeling in the Chamber against him, both by arguments in the press and by private conversations. Rastignac has also given orders among the ministerial adherents to that effect. We may feel confident, therefore, that by the end of another week our enemy will find public opinion solidly against him.

Will you permit me, madame, to recall myself to the memory of Mademoiselle Cécile, and accept yourself, together with Monsieur Beauvisage, the assurance of my most respectful sentiments.

A hint from certain quarters given to the ministerial journals now began to surround Sallenaue's name with an atmosphere of disrespect and ridicule; insulting insinuations colored his absence with an appearance of escaping the charges. The effect of these attacks was all the greater because Sallenaue was very weakly defended by his political co-religionists, which was scarcely surprising. Not knowing how to explain his conduct, the Opposition papers were afraid to commit themselves in favor of a man whose future was daily becoming more nebulous.

On the evening before the day on which the time granted for an explanation would expire, Sallenaue being still absent, a ministerial paper published, under the heading of "A Lost Deputy," a very witty and insolent article, which was read by every one and created a great sensation. During that evening Madame de l'Estorade went to see Madame de Camps, whom she found alone with her husband. She was greatly agitated, and said, as soon as she entered the room, —

"Have you read that infamous article?"

"No," replied Madame Octave, "but Monsieur de Camps was just telling me about it. It is really shameful that the ministry should not only countenance, but instigate such villanies."

"I am half crazy," said Madame de l'Estorade; "the whole blame rests on us."

"That is saying too much," said Madame Octave.

"No," said her husband, "I agree with madame; all the venom of this affair could have been destroyed by one action of l'Estorade's, and in refusing to make it

he is, if not the author, at least the accomplice of this slander."

"Your wife has told you —" began Madame de l'Estorade in a reproachful tone.

"Yes," said Madame de Camps; "it was necessary to explain to my husband the sort of madness that seemed to have taken possession of M. de l'Estorade; but what I said to him was not unfaithful to any secret that concerned you personally."

"Ah! you are such a united pair," said Madame de l'Estorade, with a heavy sigh. "I don't regret that you have told all that to your husband; in fact, two heads are better than one to advise me in the cruel position in which I am placed."

"What has happened?" asked Madame de Camps.

"My husband is losing his head," replied the countess. "I don't see a trace of his old moral sense left in him. Far from understanding that he is, as Monsieur de Camps said just now, the accomplice of the shameful attack which is going on, and that he has not, like those who started it, the excuse of ignorance, he actually seems to take delight in this wickedness. Just now he brought me that vile paper triumphantly, and I could scarcely prevent his being very angry with me for not agreeing with his opinion that it was infinitely witty and amusing."

"That letter of Monsieur Gaston's was a terrible shock to him," said Madame de Camps, — "a shock not only to his heart but to his body."

"I admit that," said her husband; "but, hang it! a man is a man, and he ought to take the words of a maniac for what they are worth."

•

"It is certainly very singular that Monsieur de Sallenaue does not return," said Madame Octave; "for that Joseph Bricheteau, to whom you gave his address, must have written to him."

"Oh!" cried the countess, "there's fatality in the whole thing. To-morrow the question of confirming the election or not comes up in the Chamber; and if Monsieur de Sallenaue is not here by that time, the ministry expect to annul it."

"It is infamous," said Monsieur de Camps, "and I have a great mind to go myself to the president of the Chamber, and tell him how matters are."

"I would have asked you to do so at the risk of my husband suspecting my interference, but one thing restrained me. Monsieur de Sallenaue particularly desires that Monsieur Gaston's mental condition be not made public."

"It is evident," said Madame de Camps, "that to defend him in that way would go against his wishes. After all, the decision against him in the Chamber is very doubtful, whereas Monsieur Gaston's madness, if mentioned publicly, would never be forgotten."

"But I have not told you the worst so far as I am concerned," said Madame de l'Estorade. "Just before dinner my husband imparted to me an absolutely Satanic desire of his — order, I might call it."

"What was it?" asked Madame de Camps, anxiously.

"He wishes me to go with him to the Chamber to-morrow, — to the gallery reserved for the peers of France, — and listen to the discussion."

"He is actually, as you say, losing his head," cried

Monsieur de Camps; "he is like Thomas Diafoirus, proposing to take his fiancée to enjoy a dissection —"

Madame de Camps made her husband a sign which meant, "Don't pour oil on the fire." Then she asked the countess whether she had tried to show M. de l'Estorade the impropriety of that step.

"The moment I began to object," replied the countess, "he was angry, and said I must be very anxious to keep up our intimacy with 'that man' when I rejected such a natural opportunity to show publicly that the acquaintance was at an end."

"Well, my dear, you will have to go," said Madame de Camps. "The peace of your home before everything else! Besides, considering all things, your presence at the discussion may be taken as a proof of kindly interest."

"For sixteen years," remarked Monsieur de Camps, "you have ruled and governed in your home; and here, at last, is a revolution which cruelly overturns your power."

"Ah, monsieur, I beg you to believe that that sovereignty — which I always sought to conceal — I never used arbitrarily."

"As if I did not know that!" replied Monsieur de Camps, taking Madame de l'Estorade's hand and pressing it affectionately. "I am, nevertheless, of my wife's opinion: you will have to drink this cup."

"But I shall die of shame in listening to the ministerial infamies; I shall feel that they are cutting the throat of a man whom two words from me could save."

“True,” said Monsieur de Camps, “and a man, too, who has done you a vast service. But you must choose: do you prefer to bring hell into your home, and exasperate the unhealthy condition of your husband’s mind?”

“Listen to me, dearest,” said Madame de Camps. “Tell Monsieur de l’Estorade that I want to go to this session, and ask him for a permit; don’t yield the point to any objections. I shall then be there to take care of you, and perhaps protect you from yourself.”

“I did not dare ask it of you,” replied Madame de l’Estorade. “We don’t usually invite friends to see us commit bad actions; but since you are so kind as to offer, I can truly say I shall be less wretched if you are with me. Now good-bye; I don’t want my husband to find me out when he comes home. He is dining with Monsieur de Rastignac, where, no doubt, they are plotting for to-morrow.”

“Yes, go; and I will write you a note in the course of an hour, as if I had not seen you, asking you to get me a permit for to-morrow’s session, which I am told will be very interesting.”

“To be reduced to conspiracy!” cried Madame de l’Estorade, kissing her friend.

“My dear love,” said Madame de Camps, “they say the life of a Christian is a struggle, but that of a woman married in a certain way is a pitched battle. Have patience and courage.”

So saying, the two friends separated.

The next day, about two o’clock, Madame de l’Estorade, accompanied by her husband and Madame Octave de Camps, took their places in the gallery reserved for

the members of the peerage. She seemed ill, and answered languidly the bows and salutations that were addressed to her from all parts of the Chamber. Madame de Camps, who was present for the first time in the parliamentary precincts, made two observations: first, she objected strongly to the slovenly costume of a great many of the "honorable gentlemen;" and she was also amazed at the number of bald heads she looked down upon from the gallery. Monsieur de l'Estorade took pains to point out to her all the notabilities present: first, the great men whom we need not mention, because their names are in everybody's memory; next, the poet Canalis, whose air she thought Olympian; d'Arthèz, who pleased her by his modesty and absence of assumption; Vinet, of whom she remarked that he was like a viper in spectacles; Victorin Hulot, a noted orator of the Left Centre. It was some time before she could accustom herself to the hum of the various conversations, which seemed to her like the buzzing of bees around their hive; but the thing that most amazed her was the general aspect of this assemblage of legislators, where a singular *laissez-aller* and a total absence of dignity would never have led her to suppose she was in the hall of the representatives of a great people.

It was written that on this day no pain or unpleasantness should be spared to Madame de l'Estorade. Just before the sitting began, the Marquise d'Espard, accompanied by Monsieur de Ronquerolles, entered the peers' gallery and took her seat beside the countess. Though meeting constantly in society, the two women could not endure each other. Madame de l'Estorade



despised the spirit of intrigue, the total lack of principle, and the sour, malevolent nature which the marquise covered with an elegant exterior; and the marquise despised, to a still greater degree, what she called the *pot-au-feu* virtues of Madame de l'Estorade. It must also be mentioned that Madame de l'Estorade was thirty-two years old and her beauty was still undimmed, whereas Madame d'Espard was forty-four, and, in spite of the careful dissimulations of the toilet, her beauty was fairly at an end.

"You do not often come here, I think," said Madame d'Espard, after the usual conventional phrases about the *pleasure* of their meeting had passed.

"I never come," replied Madame de l'Estorade.

"And I am most assiduous," said Madame d'Espard.

Then, pretending to a sudden recollection, she added, —

"Ah! I forgot; you have a special interest, I think, on this occasion. A friend of yours is to be *judged*, is he not?"

"Yes; Monsieur de Sallenaue has been to our house several times."

"How sad it is," said the marquise, "to see a man who, Monsieur de Ronquerolles tells me, had the making of a hero in many ways, come down to the level of the correctional police."

"His crime so far," said Madame de l'Estorade, dryly, "consists solely in his absence."

"At any rate," continued the marquise, "he seems to be a man eaten up by ambition. Before his parliamentary attempt, he made, as you doubtless know, a

matrimonial attempt upon the Lantys, which ended in the beautiful heiress of that family, into whose good graces he had insinuated himself, being sent to a convent."

Madame de l'Estorade was not much surprised at finding that this history, which Sallenaue had told her as very secret, had reached the knowledge of Madame d'Espard. The marquise was one of the best informed women in Paris; her salon, as an old academician had said mythologically, was the Temple of Fame.

"I think the sitting is about to begin," said Madame de l'Estorade; fearing some blow from the claws of the marquise, she was eager to put an end to the conversation.

The president had rung his bell, the deputies were taking their seats, the curtain was about to rise. As a faithful narrator of the session we desire our readers to attend, we think it safer and better in every way to copy *verbatim* the report of the debate as given in one of the morning papers of the following day.

#### CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

In the chair, M. Cointet (vice-president).

(Sitting of May 28.)

At two o'clock the president takes his seat.

M. the Keeper of the Seals, M. the minister of the Interior, M. the minister of Public Works, are on the ministerial bench.

The minutes of the last session are read, approved, and accepted.

The order of the day is the verification of the powers and the admission of the deputy elected by the arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube.

*The President.* — M. the reporter, from the Committee on the elections of the department of the Aube, has the floor.

*The Reporter.* — Gentlemen, the singular and regrettable situation in which Monsieur de Sallenaue has placed himself has not terminated in the manner that was hoped and expected last week. The period of delay expired yesterday; Monsieur de Sallenaue continues to absent himself from your sittings, and no letter has reached M. le président asking for further leave of absence. This indifference to the functions which Monsieur de Sallenaue appeared to have solicited with so much eagerness [slight agitation on the Left] would be, in any case, a grave mistake; but when connected with an accusation that seriously compromises the deputy elect, it must be regarded as altogether unfortunate for his reputation. [Murmurs on the Left. Approbation from the Centre.] Compelled to search for the solution of a difficulty which may be said to be without precedent in parliamentary annals, your committee, in the adoption of suitable measures, finds itself divided into two very distinct opinions. The minority whom I represent — the committee consisting of but three members — thinks that it ought to submit to you a resolution which I shall call radical, and which has for its object the cutting short of the difficulty by returning the question to its natural judges. *Annul hic et nunc* the election of Monsieur de Sallenaue, and send him back to the

voters by whom he was elected and of whom he is so unfaithful a representative. Such is one of the solutions I have the honor to present to you. [Agitation on the Left.] The majority, on the contrary, are of opinion that the will of the electors cannot be too highly respected, and that the faults of a man honored by their confidence ought not to be discussed until the utmost limits of forbearance and indulgence have been passed. Consequently your committee instruct me to suggest that you grant to Monsieur de Sallenaue a further delay of fifteen days [murmurs from the Centre; "Very good! very good!" from the Left]; being satisfied that if after that delay Monsieur de Sallenaue does not present himself or give any other sign of existence, it will be sufficient proof that he has thrown up his election, and the Chamber need not be dragged on his account into irritating and useless debates. [Murmurs of various kinds.]

M. le Colonel Franchessini, who during the foregoing speech was sitting on the ministers' bench in earnest conversation with the minister of Public Works, here demanded the floor.

*The President.* — M. de Canalis has already asked for it.

*M. de Canalis.* — Gentlemen, M. de Sallenaue is one of those bold men who, like myself, are convinced that politics are not forbidden fruit to any form of intellect, and that in the poet, in the artist, as well as in the magistrate, the administrator, the lawyer, the physician, and the property-holder, may be found the stuff that makes a statesman. In virtue of this community of opinion, M. de Sallenaue has my entire

sympathy, and no one can be surprised to see me mount this tribune to support the proposal of the majority of your committee. I cannot, however, agree to their final conclusion; and the idea of our colleague being declared, without discussion, dismissed from this Chamber through the single fact of his absence, prolonged without leave, is repugnant to my reason and also to my conscience. You are told: "The absence of M. de Sallenaue is all the more reprehensible because he is under the odium of a serious accusation." But suppose this accusation is the very cause of his absence — ["Ha! ha!" from the Centre, and laughter.] Allow me to say, gentlemen, that I am not, perhaps, quite so artless as Messieurs the laughers imagine. I have one blessing, at any rate: ignoble interpretations do not come into my mind; and that M. de Sallenaue, with the eminent position he has filled in the world of art, should seek to enter the world of politics by means of a crime, is a supposition which I cannot admit *a priori*. Around a birth like his two hideous spiders called slander and intrigue have every facility to spread their toils; and far from admitting that he has fled before the accusation that now attacks him, I ask myself whether his absence does not mean that he is now engaged in collecting the elements of his defence. [Left: "Very good!" "That's right." Ironical laughter in the Centre.] Under that supposition — in my opinion most probable — so far from arraigning him in consequence of this absence, ought we not rather to consider it as an act of deference to the Chamber whose deliberations he did not feel worthy to share until he found himself in a position to confound his calumniators?

*A Voice.* — He wants leave of absence for ten years, like Telemachus, to search for his father. [General laughter.]

*M. de Canalis.* — I did not expect so poetical an interruption; but since the memory of the Odyssey has been thus evoked, I shall ask the Chamber to kindly remember that Ulysses, though disguised as a beggar and loaded with insults, was yet able to string his bow and easily get the better of his enemies. [Violent murmurs from the Centre.] I vote for leave of absence for fifteen days, and that the Chamber be again consulted at the expiration of that time.

*M. le Colonel Franchessini.* — I do not know if the last speaker intended to intimidate the Chamber, but, for my part, such arguments have very little power upon me, and I am always ready to send them back whence they came. [Left: "Come! come!"]

*The President.* — Colonel, no provocations!

*M. le Colonel Franchessini.* — I am, however, of the opinion of the speaker who has preceded me; I do not think that the delinquent has fled to escape the accusation against him. Neither that accusation, nor the effect it will produce upon your minds, nor even the quashing of his election would be able at this moment to occupy his mind. Do you wish to know what M. de Sallenaue is doing in England? Then read the English papers. For the last week they have rung with the praises of a new prima donna who has just made her first appearance at the London opera-house. [Violent murmurs; interruption.]

*A Voice.* — Such gossip is unworthy of this Chamber!

*M. le Colonel Franchessini.* — Gentlemen, being more

accustomed to the frankness of camps than to the reticence of these precincts, I may perhaps have committed the impropriety of thinking aloud. The preceding speaker said to you that he believed M. de Sallenaue was employed in collecting his means of defence; well, I do not say to you "I believe," I tell you I *know* that a rich stranger succeeded in substituting his protection for that which Phidias, our colleague, was bestowing on his handsome model, an Italian woman — [Fresh interruption. "Order! order!" "This is intolerable!"]

*A Voice.* — M. le président, silence the speaker!

Colonel Franchessini crosses his arms and waits till the tumult subsides.

*The President.* — I request the speaker to keep to the question.

*M. le Colonel Franchessini.* — The question! I have not left it. But, inasmuch as the Chamber refuses to hear me, I declare that I side with the minority of the committee. It seems to me very proper to send M. de Sallenaue back to his electors in order to know whether they intended to send a deputy or a lover to this Chamber — ["Order! order!" Loud disturbance on the Left. The tumult increases.]

M. de Canalis hurries to the tribune.

*The President.* — M. le ministre of Public Works has asked for the floor; as minister of the king he has the first right to be heard.

*M. de Rastignac.* — It has not been without remonstrance on my part, gentlemen, that this scandal has been brought to your notice. I endeavored, in the name of the long friendship which unites me to Colo-

nel Franchessini, to persuade him not to speak on this delicate subject, lest his parliamentary inexperience, aggravated in a measure by his witty facility of speech, should lead him to some very regrettable indiscretion. Such, gentlemen, was the subject of the little conversation you may have seen that he held with me on my bench before he asked for the floor; and I myself have asked for the same privilege only in order to remove from your minds all idea of my complicity in the great mistake he has just, as I think, committed by condescending to the private details he has thought fit to relate to this assembly. But as, against my intention, and I may add against my will, I have entered the tribune, the Chamber will permit me, perhaps, — although no ministerial interest is here concerned, — to say a few words. [Cries from the Centre: “Go on!” “Speak!”]

M. le ministre then went on to say that the conduct of the absent deputy showed contempt for the Chamber; he was treating it lightly and cavalierly. M. de Sallenaue had asked for leave of absence; but how or where had he asked for it? From a foreign country! That is to say, he began by taking it, and then asked for it! Did he trouble himself, as is usual in such cases, to give a reason for the request? No; he merely says, in his letter to your president, that he is forced to absent himself on “urgent business,” — a very convenient excuse, on which the Chamber might be depopulated of half its members. But, supposing that M. de Sallenaue’s business was really urgent, and that he thought it of a nature not to be explained in a letter that would necessarily be made public, why



had he not written confidentially to the president, or even requested a friend in some responsible position, whose simple word would have sufficed, to assure the Chamber of the necessity of the deputy's absence without requiring any statement of private reasons?

At this point M. de Rastignac's remarks were interrupted by a commotion in the corridor to the right. Several deputies left their seats; others jumped upon the benches, apparently endeavoring to see something. The minister, after turning to the president, from whom he seemed to be asking an explanation, went back to the ministerial bench, where he was immediately surrounded by a number of the deputies of the Centre, among whom, noticeable for the vehemence of his gestures, was M. le procureur-général Vinet. Groups formed in the audience chamber; the sitting was, in fact, informally suspended.

After a few moments' delay M. le président rings his bell.

*The Ushers.* — Take your seats, gentlemen.

The deputies hasten on all sides to do so.

*The President.* — M. de Sallenauve has the floor.

M. de Sallenauve, who, during the few moments that the sitting was interrupted by his entrance, has been talking with M. de Canalis and M. d'Arthèz, goes to the tribune. His manner is modest, but he shows no sign of embarrassment. Every one is struck by his resemblance to the portraits of one of the most fiery of the revolutionary orators.

*A Voice.* — It is Danton — without the small-pox!

*M. de Sallenauve.* — [Profound silence.] Gentlemen, I do not misjudge my parliamentary value; I

know that the persecution directed apparently against me personally is, in point of fact, aimed at the political opinions I have the honor to represent. But, however that may be, my election seems to have been viewed by the ministry as a matter of some importance. In order to oppose it, a special agent and special journalists were sent to Arcis; and a humble employé under government, with a salary of fifteen hundred francs, was dismissed, after twenty years of faithful and honorable service, for having aided in my success. [Loud murmurs from the Centre.] I thank my honorable interrupters, feeling sure that their loud disapprobation is given to this strange dismissal, which is not open to the slightest doubt. [Laughter on the Left.] As for me, gentlemen, who could not be dismissed, I have been attacked with another weapon, — sagacious calumny, combined with my fortunate absence —

*The Minister of Public Works.* — Of course the government sent you out of the country!

*M. de Sallenauve.* — No, Monsieur le ministre. I do not attribute my absence to either your influence or your suggestions; it was necessitated by imperious duty, and it had no other instigation or motive. But, as to the part which you have really taken in the denunciation set on foot against me, I am about to tell the facts, and the Chamber will consider them. [Close attention.] The law, in order to protect the independence of the deputy, directs that no criminal prosecution can be begun against a member of the national representation without the preliminary consent of the Chamber; this fact has been turned with great adroit-

ness against me. If the complaint had been laid before the magistrates, it could not have been admitted even for an instant; it is simply a bare charge, not supported by evidence of any kind; and I have never heard that the public authorities are in the habit of prosecuting citizens on the mere allegation of the first-comer. We must therefore admire the subtlety of mind which instantly perceived that, by petitioning you for leave to prosecute, all the benefits of the accusation, politically speaking, would be obtained without encountering the difficulty I have mentioned in the courts. [Excitement.] Now, to what able parliamentary tactician must we ascribe the honor of this invention? You know already, gentlemen, that it is due ostensibly to a woman, a peasant-woman, one who labors for her living; hence the conclusion is that the peasant-women of Champagne have an intellectual superiority of which, up to this time, neither you nor I were at all aware. [Laughter.] It must be said, however, that before coming to Paris to lodge her complaint, this woman had an interview with the Mayor of Arcis, my opponent on the ministerial side in the late election. From this conference she obtained certain lights. To which we must add that the mayor, taking apparently much interest in the charge to be brought against me, agreed to pay the costs, not only of the peasant-woman's trip to Paris, but also those of the village practitioner by whom she was accompanied. [Left: "Ha! ha!"] This superior woman having arrived in Paris, with whom did she immediately communicate? With the special agent sent down to Arcis by the government to insure the

success of the ministerial candidate. And who drew up the petition to this honorable Chamber for the necessary authority to proceed to a criminal prosecution? Not precisely the special ministerial agent himself, but a barrister under his dictation, and after a breakfast to which the peasant-woman and her adviser were invited in order to furnish the necessary information. [Much excitement. "Hear! hear!"]

*The Minister of Public Works from his seat.* — Without discussing the truth of these statements, as to which I have personally no knowledge, I affirm upon my honor that the government is completely ignorant of the proceedings now related, which it blames and disavows in the most conclusive manner.

*M. de Sallenaue.* — After the formal declaration which I have had the good fortune to evoke it would ill become me, gentlemen, to insist on tracing the responsibility for this intrigue back to the government. But what I have already said will seem to you natural when you remember that, as I entered this hall, the minister of Public Works was in the tribune, taking part, in a most unusual manner, in a discussion on discipline wholly outside of his department, and endeavoring to persuade you that I had conducted myself towards this honorable body with a total want of reverence.

The minister of Public Works said a few words which did not reach us. Great disturbance.

*M. Victorin Hulot.* — M. le président, have the goodness to request the minister of Public Works not to interrupt the speaker. He can answer.

*M. de Sallenaue.* — According to M. le Comte de

Rastignac, I showed essential disrespect to the Chamber by asking, in a foreign country, for leave of absence, which it was obvious I had already taken before making my request. But, in his extreme desire to find me to blame, the minister lost sight of the fact that at the time I left France the Chamber had not met, no president existed, and therefore in making my request at that time to the president of this assembly I should simply have addressed a pure abstraction. [Left: "True!"] As for the insufficiency of the motives with which I supported my request, I regret to have to say to the Chamber that I cannot be more explicit even now; because in revealing the true cause of my absence I should betray the secret of an honorable man, and not my own. I did not conceal from myself that by this reticence I exposed my proceedings to mistaken interpretations, — though I certainly did not expect it to give rise to accusations as burlesque as they are odious. [Much excitement.] In point of fact, I was so anxious not to neglect any of the duties of my new position that I did precisely what the minister of Public Works reproaches me for not doing. I selected a man in a most honorable position, who was, like myself, a repository of the secret I am unable to divulge, and I requested him to make all necessary explanations to the president of this Chamber. But, calumny having no doubt worked upon his mind, that honorable person must have thought it compromising to his name and dignity to do me this service. The danger to me being now over, I shall not betray his prudent incognito. Though I was far indeed from expecting this calculating selfishness,

which has painfully surprised and wounded me, I shall be careful to keep this betrayal of friendship between myself and his own conscience, which alone shall reproach him for the wrong he has done me.

At this moment a disturbance occurred in the peers' gallery; a lady had fainted; and several deputies, among them a physician, left the hall hastily. The sitting was momentarily suspended.

*The President.* — Ushers, open the ventilators. It is want of air that has caused this unfortunate accident. M. de Sallenaue, be good enough to resume your speech.

*M. de Sallenaue.* — Two words, gentlemen, and I have finished. I think the petition to authorize a criminal prosecution has already lost something of its weight in the minds of my least cordial colleagues. But I have here a letter from the Romilly peasant-woman, my relation, duly signed and authenticated, withdrawing her charge and confirming all the explanations I have just had the honor to give you. I might read this letter aloud to you, but I think it more becoming to place it in the hands of M. le président. ["Very good! very good!"] As for my illegal absence, I returned to Paris early this morning, and I could have been in my seat at the opening of the Chamber; but, as M. de Canalis has told you, I had it much at heart not to appear in this hall until I could disperse the cloud which has so strangely appeared around my reputation. It has taken me the whole morning to obtain these papers. And now, gentlemen, you have to decide whether a few hours' delay in taking his seat in this Chamber justifies you in send-

ing a colleague back to his electors. But after all, whatever is done, whether some persist in thinking me a forger, or a libertine, or merely a negligent deputy, I feel no anxiety about the verdict of my electors. I can confidently assert that after a delay of a few weeks I shall return to you.

*Cries on all sides.* — The vote! the vote!

On leaving the tribune M. de Sallenaue receives many congratulations.

*The President.* — I put to vote the admission of M. de Sallenaue as the deputy elected by the arrondissement of Arcis.

Nearly the whole Chamber rises and votes the admission; a few deputies of the Centre alone abstain from taking part in the demonstration.

M. de Sallenaue is admitted and takes the oath.

*The President.* — The order of the day calls for the reading of the Address to the Throne, but the chairman of the committee appointed to prepare it informs me that the document in question cannot be communicated to the Chamber before to-morrow. Nothing else being named in the order of the day, I declare this sitting adjourned.

The Chamber rose at half-past four o'clock.

NOTE. — “The Deputy of Arcis,” of which Balzac wrote and published the first part in 1847. was left unfinished at his death. He designated M. Charles Rabou, editor of the “*Revue de Paris*,” as the person to take his notes and prepare the rest of the volume for the press. It is instructive to a student of Balzac to see how disconnected and out of proportion the story becomes in these latter parts, — show-

ing plainly that the master's hand was in the habit of pruning away half, if not more, of what it had written, or — to change the metaphor and give the process in his own language — that he put *les grands pots dans les petits pots*, the quarts into the pint pots. "If a thing can be done in one line instead of two," he says, "I try to do it."

Some parts of this conclusion are evidently added by M. Rabou, and are not derived from Balzac at all, — especially the unnecessary reincarnation of Vautrin. There is no trace of the master's hand here. The character is made silly and puerile, and is so out of keeping with Balzac's strong portrait, which never weakens, that the translator has thought best, in justice to Vautrin, to omit all that is not absolutely necessary to connect the story. — TR.

THE END.



*THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE*

By H. DE BALZAC

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SCENES FROM POLITICAL LIFE

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AN HISTORICAL MYSTERY

AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR







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# CONTENTS.

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## PART I.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. JUDAS . . . . .	1
II. A CRIME RELINQUISHED . . . . .	28
III. THE MASK THROWN OFF . . . . .	47
IV. LAURENCE DE CINQ-CYGNE . . . . .	58
V. ROYALIST HOMES AND PORTRAITS UNDER THE CONSULATE . . . . .	72
VI. A DOMICILIARY VISIT . . . . .	89
VII. A FOREST NOOK . . . . .	105
VIII. TRIALS OF THE POLICE . . . . .	122
IX. FOILED . . . . .	149

## PART II.

X. ONE AND THE SAME, YET A TWO-FOLD LOVE . . . . .	165
XI. WISE COUNSEL . . . . .	188
XII. THE FACTS OF A MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR	202





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

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	PAGE
MICHU . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“The gendarmes surround the Château now and are as good as a net” . . . . .	97
“The senator, who had risen from his bed of moss, sighed when he saw the masked face” . . . . .	258
“When well beyond the horizontal rays of light thrown across the pavement, she turned abruptly and saw a human form looming through the fog” . . . . .	341



# AN HISTORICAL MYSTERY.

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TO MONSIEUR DE MARGONE.

In grateful remembrance, from his guest at the Château de  
Saché. DE BALZAC.

## PART I.

### I.

#### JUDAS.

THE autumn of the year 1803 was one of the finest in the early part of that period of the present century which we now call "*Empire*." Rain had refreshed the earth during the month of October, so that the trees were still green and leafy in November. The French people were beginning to put faith in a secret understanding between the skies and Bonaparte, then declared Consul for life, — a belief to which that man owes part of his prestige ; strange to say, on the day the sun failed him, in 1812, his luck ceased !

About four in the afternoon on the fifteenth of November, 1803, the sun was casting what looked like scarlet dust upon the venerable tops of four rows of

elms in a long baronial avenue, and sparkling on the sand and grassy places of an immense *rond-point*, such as we often see in the country where land is cheap enough to be sacrificed to ornament. The air was so pure, the atmosphere so tempered that a family was sitting out of doors as though it were summer. A man dressed in a hunting-jacket of green drilling with green buttons, and breeches of the same stuff, and wearing shoes with thin soles and gaiters to the knee, was cleaning a gun with the minute care a skilful huntsman gives to the work in his leisure hours. This man had neither game nor game-bag, nor any of the accoutrements which denote either departure for a hunt or the return from it; and two women sitting near were looking at him as though beset by a terror they could ill-conceal. Any one observing the scene taking place in this leafy nook would have shuddered, as the old mother-in-law and the wife of the man we speak of were now shuddering. A huntsman does not take such minute precautions with his weapon to kill small game, neither does he use, in the department of the Aube, a heavy rifled carbine.

“ Shall you kill a roe-buck, Michu?” said his handsome young wife, trying to assume a laughing air.

Before replying, Michu looked at his dog, which had been lying in the sun, its paws stretched out and its nose on its paws, in the charming attitude of a trained

hunter. The animal had just raised its head and was snuffing the air, first down the avenue nearly a mile long which stretched before them, and then up the cross road where it entered the *rond-point* to the left.

“No,” answered Michu, “but a brute I do not wish to miss, a lynx.”

The dog, a magnificent spaniel, white with brown spots, growled.

“Hah!” said Michu, talking to himself, “spies! the country swarms with them.”

Madame Michu looked appealingly to heaven. A beautiful fair woman with blue eyes, composed and thoughtful in expression and made like an antique statue, she seemed to be a prey to some dark and bitter grief. The husband's appearance may explain to a certain extent the evident fear of the two women. The laws of physiognomy are precise, not only in their application to character, but also in relation to the destinies of life. There is such a thing as prophetic physiognomy. If it were possible (and such a vital statistic would be of value to society) to obtain exact likenesses of those who perish on the scaffold, the science of Lavater and also that of Gall would prove unmistakably that the heads of all such persons, even those who are innocent, show prophetic signs. Yes, fate sets its mark on the faces of those who are doomed to die a violent death of any kind. Now, this sign, this seal,

visible to the eye of an observer, was imprinted on the expressive face of the man with the rifled carbine. Short and stout, abrupt and active in his motions as a monkey, though calm in temperament, Michu had a white face injected with blood, and features set close together like those of a Tartar, — a likeness to which his crinkled red hair conveyed a sinister expression. His eyes, clear and yellow as those of a tiger, showed depths behind them in which the glance of whoever examined the man might lose itself and never find either warmth or motion. Fixed, luminous, and rigid, those eyes terrified whoever gazed into them. The singular contrast between the immobility of the eyes and the activity of the body increased the chilling impression conveyed by a first sight of Michu. Action, always prompt in this man, was the outcome of a single thought; just as the life of animals is, without reflection, the outcome of instinct. Since 1793 he had trimmed his red beard to the shape of a fan. Even if he had not been (as he was during the Terror) president of a club of Jacobins, this peculiarity of his head would in itself have made him terrible to behold. His Socratic face with its blunt nose was surmounted by a fine forehead, so projecting, however, that it overhung the rest of the features. The ears, well detached from the head, had the sort of mobility which we find in those or wild animals, which are ever on the qui-vive.

The mouth, half-open, as the custom usually is among country-people, showed teeth that were strong and white as almonds, but irregular. Gleaming red whiskers framed this face, which was white and yet mottled in spots. The hair, cropped close in front and allowed to grow long at the sides and on the back of the head, brought into relief, by its savage redness, all the strange and fateful peculiarities of this singular face. The neck which was short and thick, seemed to tempt the axe.

At this moment the sunbeams, falling in long lines athwart the group, lighted up the three heads at which the dog from time to time glanced up. The spot on which this scene took place was magnificently fine. The *rond-point* is at the entrance of the park of Gondreville, one of the finest estates in France, and by far the finest in the department of the Aube; it boasts of long avenues of elms, a castle built from designs by Mansart, a park of fifteen hundred acres inclosed by a stone wall, nine large farms, a forest, mills, and meadows. This almost regal property belonged before the Revolution to the family of Simeuse. Ximeuse was a feudal estate in Lorraine; the name was pronounced Simeuse, and in course of time it came to be written as pronounced.

The great fortune of the Simeuse family, adherents of the House of Burgundy, dates from the time when

the Guises were in conflict with the Valois. Richelieu first, and afterwards Louis XIV. remembered their devotion to the factious house of Lorraine, and rebuffed them. The then Marquis de Simeuse, an old Burgundian, old Guiser, old leaguer, old *frondeur* (he inherited the four great rancors of the nobility against royalty), came to live at Cinq-Cygne. The former courtier, rejected at the Louvre, married the widow of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, younger branch of the famous family of Chargebœuf, one of the most illustrious names in Champagne, and now as celebrated and opulent as the elder. The marquis, among the richest men of his day, instead of wasting his substance at court, built the château of Gondreville, enlarged the estate by the purchase of others, and united the several domains, solely for the purposes of a hunting-ground. He also built the Simeuse mansion at Troyes, not far from that of the Cinq-Cygnés. These two old houses and the bishop's palace were long the only stone mansions at Troyes. The marquis sold Simeuse to the Duc de Lorraine. His son wasted the father's savings and some part of his great fortune under the reign of Louis XV., but he subsequently entered the navy, became a vice-admiral, and redeemed the follies of his youth by brilliant services. The Marquis de Simeuse, son of this naval worthy, perished with his wife on the scaffold at Troyes, leaving twin sons, who emigrated and were, at

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the time our history opens, still in foreign parts following the fortunes of the house of Condé.

The *rond-point* was the scene of the meet in the time of the "Grand Marquis" — a name given in the family to the Simeuse who built Gondreville. Since 1789 Michu lived in the hunting lodge at the entrance to the park, built in the reign of Louis XIV., and called the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne. The village of Cinq-Cygne is at the end of the forest of Nôdesme (a corruption of Notre-Dame) which was reached through the fine avenue of four rows of elms where Michu's dog was now suspecting spies. After the death of the Grand Marquis this pavilion fell into disuse. The vice-admiral preferred the court and the sea to Champagne, and his son gave the dilapidated building to Michu for a dwelling.

This noble structure is of brick, with vermiculated stone-work at the angles and on the casings of the doors and windows. On either side is a gateway of finely wrought iron, eaten with rust and connected by a railing, beyond which is a wide and deep ha-ha, full of vigorous trees, its parapets bristling with iron arabesques, the innumerable sharp points of which are a warning to evil-doers.

The park walls begin on each side of the circumference of the *rond-point*; on the one hand the fine semi-circle is defined by slopes planted with elms; on the

other, within the park, a corresponding half-circle is formed by groups of rare trees. The pavilion, therefore, stands at the centre of this round open space, which extends before it and behind it in the shape of two horseshoes. Michu had turned the rooms on the lower floor into a stable, a kitchen, and a wood-shed. The only trace remaining of their ancient splendor was an antechamber paved with marble in squares of black and white, which was entered on the park side through a door with small leaded panes, such as might still be seen at Versailles before Louis-Philippe turned that Château into an asylum for the glories of France. The pavilion is divided inside by an old staircase of worm-eaten wood, full of character, which leads to the first story. Above that is an immense garret. This venerable edifice is covered by one of those vast roofs with four sides, a ridgepole decorated with leaden ornaments, and a round projecting window on each side, such as Mansart, very justly delighted in; for in France, the Italian attics and flat roofs are a folly against which our climate protests. Michu kept his fodder in this garret. That portion of the park which surrounds the old pavilion is English in style. A hundred feet from the house a former lake, now a mere pond well stocked with fish, makes known its vicinity as much by a thin mist rising above the tree-tops as by the croaking of a thousand frogs, toads, and other amphibious gossips who

discourse at sunset. The time-worn look of everything, the deep silence of the woods, the long perspective of the avenue, the forest in the distance, the rusty iron-work, the masses of stone draped with velvet mosses, all made poetry of this old structure, which still exists.

At the moment when our history begins Michu was leaning against a mossy parapet on which he had laid his powder-horn, cap, handkerchief, screw-driver, and rags,—in fact, all the utensils needed for his suspicious occupation. His wife's chair was against the wall beside the outer door of the house, above which could still be seen the arms of the Simeuse family, richly carved, with their noble motto, “*Cy meurs.*” The old mother, in peasant dress, had moved her chair in front of Madame Michu, so that the latter might put her feet upon the rungs and keep them from dampness.

“Where's the boy?” said Michu to his wife.

“Round the pond; he is crazy about the frogs and the insects,” answered the mother.

Michu whistled in a way that made his hearers tremble. The rapidity with which his son ran up to him proved plainly enough the despotic power of the bailiff of Gondreville. Since 1789, but more especially since 1793, Michu had been well-nigh master of the property. The terror he inspired in his wife, his mother-in-law, a servant-lad named Gaucher, and the cook named Marianne, was shared throughout a neighborhood of

twenty miles in circumference. It may be well to give, without further delay, the reasons for this fear, — all the more because an account of them will complete the moral portrait of the man.

The old Marquis de Simeuse transferred the greater part of his property in 1790 ; but, overtaken by circumstances, he had not been able to put the estate of Gondreville into sure hands. Accused of corresponding with the Duke of Brunswick and the Prince of Cobourg, the marquis and his wife were thrust into prison and condemned to death by the revolutionary tribunal of Troyes, of which Madame Michu's father was then president. The fine domain of Gondreville was sold as national property. The head-keeper, to the horror of many, was present at the execution of the marquis and his wife in his capacity as president of the club of Jacobins at Arcis. Michu, the orphan son of a peasant, showered with benefactions by the marquise, who brought him up in her own home and gave him his place as keeper, was regarded as a Brutus by excited demagogues ; but the people of the neighborhood ceased to recognize him after this act of base ingratitude. The purchaser of the estate was a man from Arcis named Marion, grandson of a former bailiff in the Simeuse family. This man, a lawyer before and after the Revolution, was afraid of the keeper ; he made him his bailiff with a salary of three thousand francs, and

gave him an interest in the sales of timber; Michu, who was thought to have some ten thousand francs of his own laid by, married the daughter of a tanner at Troyes, an apostle of the Revolution in that town, where he was president of the revolutionary tribunal. This tanner, a man of profound convictions, who resembled Saint-Just as to character, was afterwards mixed up in Babœuf's conspiracy and killed himself to escape execution. Marthe was the handsomest girl in Troyes. In spite of her shrinking modesty she had been forced by her formidable father to play the part of Goddess of Liberty in some republican ceremony.

The new proprietor came only three times to Gondreville in the course of seven years. His grandfather had been bailiff of the estate under the Simeuse family, and all Arcis took for granted that the citizen Marion was the secret representative of the present Marquis and his twin brother. As long as the Terror lasted, Michu, still bailiff of Gondreville, a devoted patriot, son-in-law of the president of the revolutionary tribunal of Troyes and flattered by Malin, representative from the department of the Aube, was the object of a certain sort of respect. But when the Mountain was overthrown and after his father-in-law committed suicide, he found himself a scape-goat; everybody hastened to accuse him, in common with his father-in-law, of acts to which, so far as he was concerned, he was a tota-

stranger. The bailiff resented the injustice of the community; he stiffened his back and took an attitude of hostility. He talked boldly. But after the 18th Brumaire he maintained an unbroken silence, the philosophy of the strong; he struggled no longer against public opinion, and contented himself with attending to his own affairs, — wise conduct, which led his neighbors to pronounce him sly, for he owned, it was said, a fortune of not less than a hundred thousand francs in landed property. In the first place, he spent nothing; next, this property was legitimately acquired, partly from the inheritance of his father-in-law's estate, and partly from the savings of six thousand francs a year, the salary he derived from his place with its profits and emoluments. He had been bailiff of Gondreville for the last twelve years and every one had estimated the probable amount of his savings, so that when, after the Consulate was proclaimed, he bought a farm for fifty thousand francs, the suspicions attaching to his former opinions lessened, and the community of Arcis gave him credit for intending to recover himself in public estimation. Unfortunately, at the very moment when public opinion was condoning his past a foolish affair, envenomed by the gossip of the country-side, revived the latent and very general belief in the ferocity of his character.

One evening, coming away from Troyes in company

with several peasants, among whom was the farmer at Cinq-Cygne, he let fall a paper on the main road; the farmer, who was walking behind him, stooped and picked it up. Michu turned round, saw the paper in the man's hands, pulled a pistol from his belt and threatened the farmer (who knew how to read) to blow his brains out if he opened the paper. Michu's action was so sudden and violent, the tone of his voice so alarming, his eyes blazed so savagely, that the men about him turned cold with fear. The farmer of Cinq-Cygne was already his enemy. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, the man's employer, was a cousin of the Simeuse brothers; she had only one farm left for her maintenance and was now residing at her château of Cinq-Cygne. She lived for her cousins the twins, with whom she had played in childhood at Troyes and at Gondreville. Her only brother, Jules de Cinq-Cygne, who emigrated before the twins, died at Mayence, but by a privilege which was somewhat rare and will be mentioned later, the name of Cinq-Cygne was not to perish through lack of male heirs.

This affair between Michu and the farmer made a great noise in the arrondissement and darkened the already mysterious shadows which seemed to veil him. Nor was it the only circumstance which made him feared. A few months after this scene the citizen Marion, present owner of the Gondreville estate, came to inspect it

with the citizen Malin. Rumor said that Marion was about to sell the property to his companion, who had profited by political events and had just been appointed on the Council of State by the First Consul, in return for his services on the 18th Brumaire. The shrewd heads of the little town of Arcis now perceived that Marion had been the agent of Malin in the purchase of the property, and not of the brothers Sineuse, as was first supposed. The all-powerful Councillor of State was the most important personage in Arcis. He had obtained for one of his political friends the prefecture of Troyes, and for a farmer at Gondreville the exemption of his son from the draft; in fact, he had done services to many. Consequently the sale met with no opposition in the neighborhood where Malin then reigned, and where he still reigns supreme.

The Empire was just dawning. Those who in these days read the histories of the French Revolution can form no conception of the vast spaces which public thought traversed between events which now seem to have been so near together. The strong need of peace and tranquillity which every one felt after the violent tumults of the Revolution brought about a complete forgetfulness of important anterior facts. History matured rapidly under the advance of new and eager interests. No one, therefore, except Michu, looked into the past of this affair, which the community ac-



cepted as a simple matter. Marion, who had bought Gondreville for six hundred thousand francs in assignats, sold it for the value of a couple of million in coin; but the only payments actually made by Malin were for the costs of registration. Grévin, a seminary comrade of Malin, assisted the transaction, and the Councillor rewarded his help with the office of notary at Arcis. When the news of the sale reached the pavilion, brought there by a farmer whose farm, at Grouage, was situated between the forest and the park on the left of the noble avenue, Michu turned pale and left the house. He lay in wait for Marion, and finally met him alone in one of the shrubberies of the park.

“Is monsieur about to sell Gondreville?” asked the bailiff.

“Yes, Michu, yes. You will have a man of powerful influence for your master. He is the friend of the First Consul, and very intimate with all the ministers; he will protect you.”

“Then you were holding the estate for him?”

“I don’t say that,” replied Marion. “At the time I bought it I was looking for a place to put my money, and I invested in national property as the best security. But it does n’t suit me to keep an estate once belonging to a family in which my father was —”

“—a servant,” said Michu, violently. “But you shall not sell it! I want it; and I can pay for it.”

“ You? ”

“ Yes, I; seriously, in good gold, — eight hundred thousand francs.”

“ Eight hundred thousand francs!” exclaimed Marion. “ Where did you get them?”

“ That’s none of your business,” replied Michu; then, softening his tone, he added in a low voice: “ My father-in-law saved the lives of many persons.”

“ You are too late, Michu; the sale is made.”

“ You must put it off, monsieur!” cried the bailiff, seizing his master by the hand which he held as in a vice. “ I am hated, but I choose to be rich and powerful, and I must have Gondreville. Listen to me; I don’t cling to life; sell me that place or I’ll blow your brains out! — ”

“ But do give me time to get off my bargain with Malin; he’s troublesome to deal with.”

“ I’ll give you twenty-four hours. If you say a word about this matter I’ll chop your head off as I would chop a turnip.”

Marion and Malin left the château in the course of the night. Marion was frightened; he told Malin of the meeting and begged him to keep an eye on the bailiff. It was impossible for Marion to avoid delivering the property to the man who had been the real purchaser, and Michu did not seem likely to admit any such reason. Moreover, this service done by Marion to Malin

was to be, and in fact ended by being, the origin of the former's political fortune, and also that of his brother. In 1806 Malin had him appointed chief justice of an imperial court, and after the creation of tax-collectors his brother obtained the post of receiver-general for the department of the Aube. The State Councillor told Marion to stay in Paris, and he warned the minister of police, who gave orders that Michu should be secretly watched. Not wishing to push the man to extremities, Malin kept him on as bailiff, under the iron rule of Grévin the notary of Arcis.

From that moment Michu became more absorbed and taciturn than ever, and obtained the reputation of a man who was capable of committing a crime. Malin, the Councillor of State (a function which the First Consul raised to the level of a ministry), and a maker of the Code, played a great part in Paris, where he bought one of the finest mansions in the Faubourg Saint-Germain after marrying the only daughter of a rich contractor named Sibuelle. He never came to Gondreville; leaving all matters concerning the property to the management of Grévin, the Arcis notary. After all, what had he to fear?—he, a former representative of the Aube, and president of a club of Jacobins. And yet, the unfavorable opinion of Michu held by the lower classes was shared by the bourgeoisie, and Marion, Grévin, and Malin, without giving any reason or compromising

themselves on the subject, showed that they regarded him as an extremely dangerous man. The authorities, who were under instructions from the minister of police to watch the bailiff, did not of course lessen this belief. The neighborhood wondered that he kept his place, but supposed it was in consequence of the terror he inspired. It is easy now, after these explanations to understand the anxiety and sadness expressed in the face of Michu's wife.

In the first place, Marthe had been piously brought up by her mother. Both, being good Catholics, had suffered much from the opinions and behavior of the tanner. Marthe could never think without a blush of having marched through the street of Troyes in the garb of a goddess. Her father had forced her to marry Michu, whose bad reputation was then increasing, and she feared him too much to be able to judge him. Nevertheless, she knew that he loved her, and at the bottom of her heart lay the truest affection for this awe-inspiring man; she had never known him to do anything that was not just; never did he say a brutal word, to her at least; in fact, he endeavored to forestall her every wish. The poor pariah, believing himself disagreeable to his wife, spent most of his time out of doors. Marthe and Michu, distrustful of each other, lived in what is called in these days an "armed peace." Marthe, who saw no one, suffered keenly from the ostracism which for the last

seven years had surrounded her as the daughter of a revolutionary butcher, and the wife of a so-called traitor. More than once she had overheard the laborers of the adjoining farm (held by a man named Beauvisage, greatly attached to the Simeuse family) say as they passed the pavilion, "That's where Judas lives!" The singular resemblance between the bailiff's head and that of the thirteenth apostle, which his conduct appeared to carry out, won him that odious nickname throughout the neighborhood. It was this distress of mind, added to vague but constant fears for the future, which gave Marthe her thoughtful and subdued air. Nothing saddens so deeply as unmerited degradation from which there seems no escape. A painter could have made a fine picture of this family of pariahs in the bosom of their pretty nook in Champagne, where the landscape is generally sad.

"François!" called the bailiff, to hasten his son.

François Michu, a child of ten, played in the park and forest, and levied his little tithes like a master; he ate the fruits; he chased the game; he at least had neither cares nor troubles. Of all the family, François alone was happy in a home thus isolated from the neighborhood by its position between the park and forest, and by the still greater moral solitude of universal repulsion.

"Pick up these things," said his father, pointing to the parapet, "and put them away. Look at me! You love

your father and your mother, don't you?" The child flung himself on his father as if to kiss him, but Michu made a movement to shift the gun and pushed him back. "Very good. You have sometimes chattered about things that are done here," continued the father, fixing his eyes, dangerous as those of a wild-cat, on the boy. "Now remember this; if you tell the least little thing that happens here to Gaucher, or to the Grouage and Bellache people, or even to Marianne who loves us, you will kill your father. Never tattle again, and I will forgive what you said yesterday." The child began to cry. "Don't cry; but when any one questions you, say, as the peasants do, 'I don't know.' There are persons roaming about whom I distrust. Run along! As for you two," he added, turning to the women, "you have heard what I said. Keep a close mouth, both of you."

"Husband, what are you going to do?"

Michu, who was carefully measuring a charge of powder, poured it into the barrel of his gun, rested the weapon against the parapet and said to Marthe:—

"No one knows I own that gun. Stand in front of it."

Couraut, who had sprung to his feet, was barking furiously.

"Good, intelligent fellow!" cried Michu. "I am certain there are spies about—"

Man and beast feel a spy. Courant and Michu, who seemed to have one and the same soul, lived together as the Arab and his horse in the desert. The bailiff knew the modulations of the dog's voice, just as the dog read his master's meaning in his eyes, or felt it exhaling in the air from his body.

"What do you say to that?" said Michu, in a low voice, calling his wife's attention to two strangers who appeared in a by-path making for the *rond-point*.

"What can it mean?" cried the old mother. "They are Parisians."

"Here they come!" said Michu. "Hide my gun," he whispered to his wife.

The two men who now crossed the wide open space of the *rond-point* were typical enough for a painter. One, who appeared to be the subaltern, wore top-boots, turned down rather low, showing well-made calves, and colored silk stockings of doubtful cleanliness. The breeches, of ribbed cloth, apricot color with metal buttons, were too large; they were baggy about the body, and the lines of their creases seemed to indicate a sedentary man. A marseilles waistcoat, overloaded with embroidery, open, and held together by one button only just above the stomach, gave to the wearer a dissipated look, — all the more so, because his jet black hair, in corkscrew curls, hid his forehead and hung down his cheeks. Two steel watch-chains were festooned upon

his breeches. The shirt was adorned with a cameo in white and blue. The coat, cinnamon-colored, was a treasure to caricaturists by reason of its long tails, which, when seen from behind, bore so perfect a resemblance to a cod that the name of that fish was given to them. The fashion of codfish tails lasted ten years; almost the whole period of the empire of Napoleon. The cravat, loosely fastened, and with numerous small folds, allowed the wearer to bury his face in it up to the nostrils. His pimpled skin, his long, thick, brick-dust colored nose, his high cheek-bones, his mouth, lacking half its teeth but greedy for all that and menacing, his ears adorned with huge gold rings, his low forehead, — all these personal details, which might have seemed grotesque in many men, were rendered terrible in him by two small eyes set in his head like those of a pig, expressive of insatiable covetousness, and of insolent, half-jovial cruelty. These ferreting and perspicacious blue eyes, glassy and glacial, might be taken for the model of that famous Eye, the formidable emblem of the police, invented during the Revolution. Black silk gloves were on his hands and he carried a switch. He was certainly some official personage, for he showed in his bearing, in his way of taking snuff and ramming it into his nose, the bureaucratic importance of an office subordinate, one who signs for his superiors and acquires a passing sovereignty by enforcing their orders.



The other man, whose dress was in the same style, but elegant and elegantly put on and careful in its smallest detail, wore boots *à la* Suwaroff which came high upon the leg above a pair of tight trousers, and creaked as he walked. Above his coat he wore a spencer, an aristocratic garment adopted by the Clichyens and the young bloods of Paris, which survived both the Clichyens and the fashionable youths. In those days fashions sometimes lasted longer than parties, — a symptom of anarchy which the year of our Lord 1830 has again presented to us. This accomplished dandy seemed to be thirty years of age. His manners were those of good society; he wore jewels of value; the collar of his shirt came to the tops of his ears. His conceited and even impertinent air betrayed a consciousness of hidden superiority. His pallid face seemed bloodless, his thin flat nose had the sardonic expression which we see in a death's head, and his green eyes were inscrutable; their glance was discreet in meaning just as the thin closed mouth was discreet in words. The first man seemed on the whole a good fellow compared with this younger man, who was slashing the air with a cane, the top of which, made of gold, glittered in the sunshine. The first man might have cut off a head with his own hand, but the second was capable of entangling innocence, virtue, and beauty in the nets of calumny and intrigue, and then poisoning them or

drowning them. The rubicund stranger would have comforted his victim with a jest; the other was incapable of a smile. The first was forty-five years old, and he loved, undoubtedly, both women and good cheer. Such men have passions which keep them slaves to their calling. But the young man was plainly without passions and without vices. If he was a spy he belonged to diplomacy, and did such work from a pure love of art. He conceived, the other executed; he was the idea, the other was the form.

“This must be Gondreville, is it not, my good woman?” said the young man.

“We don’t say ‘my good woman’ here,” said Michu. “We are still simple enough to say ‘citizen’ and ‘citizeness’ in these parts.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the young man, in a natural way, and without seeming at all annoyed.

Players of écarté often have a sense of inward disaster when some unknown person sits down at the same table with them, whose manners, look, voice, and method of shuffling the cards, all, to their fancy, foretell defeat. The instant Michu looked at the young man he felt an inward and prophetic collapse. He was struck by a fatal presentiment; he had a sudden confused foreboding of the scaffold. A voice told him that that dandy would destroy him, although there was nothing whatever in common between them. For this

reason his answer was rude ; he was and he wished to be forbidding.

“ Don’t you belong to the Councillor of State, Malin ? ” said the younger man.

“ I am my own master,” answered Michu.

“ Mesdames,” said the young man, assuming a most polite air, “ are we not at Gondreville ? We are expected there by Monsieur Malin.”

“ There ’s the park,” said Michu, pointing to the open gate.

“ Why are you hiding that gun, my fine girl ? ” said the elder, catching sight of the carbine as he passed through the gate.

“ You never let a chance escape you, even in the country ! ” cried his companion.

They both turned back with a sense of distrust which the bailiff understood at once in spite of their impassible faces. Marthe let them look at the gun, to the tune of Couraut’s bark ; she was so convinced that her husband was meditating some evil deed that she was thankful for the curiosity of the strangers.

Michu flung a look at his wife which made her tremble ; he took the gun and began to load it, accepting quietly the fatal ill-luck of this encounter and the discovery of the weapon. He seemed no longer to care for life, and his wife fathomed his inward feeling.

“ So you have wolves in these parts ? ” said the young man, watching him.

“There are always wolves where there are sheep. You are in Champagne, and there’s a forest; we have wild-boars, large and small game both, a little of everything,” replied Michu, in a truculent manner.

“I’ll bet, Corentin,” said the elder of the two men, after exchanging a glance with his companion, “that this is my friend Michu —”

“We never kept pigs together that I know of,” said the bailiff.

“No, but we both presided over Jacobins, citizen,” replied the old cynic, — “you at Arcis, I elsewhere. I see you’ve kept your Carmagnole civility, but it’s no longer in fashion, my good fellow.”

“The park strikes me as rather large; we might lose our way. If you are really the bailiff show us the path to the château,” said Corentin, in a peremptory tone.

Michu whistled to his son and continued to load his gun. Corentin looked at Marthe with indifference, while his companion seemed charmed by her; but the young man noticed the signs of her inward distress, which escaped the old libertine, who had, however, noticed and feared the gun. The natures of the two men were disclosed in this trifling yet important circumstance.

“I’ve an appointment the other side of the forest,” said the bailiff. “I can’t go with you, but my son here will take you to the château. How did you get to Gondreville? did you come by Cinq-Cygne?”

“ We had, like yourself, business in the forest,” said Corentin, without apparent sarcasm.

“ François,” cried Michu, “ take these gentlemen to the château by the wood path, so that no one sees them; they don’t follow the beaten tracks. Come here,” he added, as the strangers turned to walk away, talking together as they did so in a low voice. Michu caught the boy in his arms, and kissed him almost solemnly with an expression which confirmed his wife’s fears; cold chills ran down her back; she glanced at her mother with haggard eyes, for she could not weep.

“ Go,” said Michu; and he watched the boy until he was entirely out of sight. Couraut was barking on the other side of the road in the direction of Grouage. “ Oh, that’s Violette,” remarked Michu. “ This is the third time that old fellow has passed here to-day. What’s in the wind? Hush, Couraut!”

A few moments later the trot of a pony was heard approaching.

## II.

## A CRIME RELINQUISHED.

VIOLETTE, mounted on one of those little nags which the farmers in the neighborhood of Paris use so much, soon appeared, wearing a round hat with a broad brim, beneath which his wood-colored face, deeply wrinkled, appeared in shadow. His gray eyes, mischievous and lively, concealed in a measure the treachery of his nature. His skinny legs, covered with gaiters of white linen which came to the knee, hung rather than rested in the stirrups, seemingly held in place by the weight of his hob-nailed shoes. Above his jacket of blue cloth he wore a cloak of some coarse woollen stuff woven in black and white stripes. His gray hair fell in curls behind his ears. This dress, the gray horse with its short legs, the manner in which Violette sat him, stomach projecting and shoulders thrown back, the big chapped hands which held the shabby bridle, all depicted him plainly as the grasping, ambitious peasant who desires to own land and buys it at any price. His mouth, with its bluish lips parted as if a surgeon had pried them open with a scalpel, and the innumerable wrinkles of his face and forehead hindered the play of features

which were expressive only in their outlines. Those hard, fixed lines seemed menacing, in spite of the humility which country-folks assume and beneath which they conceal their emotions and schemes, as savages and Easterns hide theirs behind an imperturbable gravity. First a mere laborer, then the farmer of Grouage through a long course of persistent ill-doing, he continued his evil practices after conquering a position which surpassed his early hopes. He wished harm to all men and wished it vehemently. When he could assist in doing harm he did it eagerly. He was openly envious; but, no matter how malignant he might be, he kept within the limits of the law, — neither beyond it nor behind it, like a parliamentary opposition. He believed his prosperity depended on the ruin of others, and that whoever was above him was an enemy against whom all weapons were good. A character like this is very common among the peasantry.

Violette's present business was to obtain from Malin an extension of the lease of his farm, which had only six years longer to run. Jealous of the bailiff's means, he watched him narrowly. The neighbors reproached him for his intimacy with "Judas;" but the sly old farmer, wishing to obtain a twelve years' lease, was really lying in wait for an opportunity to serve either the government or Malin, who distrusted Michu. Violette, by the help of the game-keeper of Gondreville and others

belonging to the estate, kept Malin informed of all Michu's actions. Malin had endeavored, fruitlessly, to win over Marianne, the Michus' servant-woman ; but Violette and his satellites heard everything from Gaucher, — a lad on whose fidelity Michu relied, but who betrayed him for cast-off clothing, waistcoats, buckles, cotton socks and sugar-plums. The boy had no suspicion of the importance of his gossip. Violette in his reports blackened all Michu's actions and gave them a criminal aspect by absurd suggestions, — unknown, of course, to the bailiff, who was aware, however, of the base part played by the farmer, and took delight in mystifying him.

“ You must have a deal of business at Bellache to be here again,” said Michu.

“ Again ! is that meant as a reproach, Monsieur Michu ? — Hey ! I did not know you had that gun. You are not going to whistle for the sparrows on that pipe, I suppose — ”

“ It grew in a field of mine which bears guns,” replied Michu. “ Look ! this is how I sow them.”

The bailiff took aim at a viper thirty feet away and cut it in two.

“ Have you got that bandit's weapon to protect your master ? ” said Violette. “ Perhaps he gave it to you.”

“ He came from Paris expressly to bring it to me,” replied Michu.



“People are talking all round the neighborhood of this journey of his; some say he is in disgrace and has to retire from office; others that he wants to see things for himself down here. But anyway, why does he come, like the First Consul, without giving warning? Did you know he was coming?”

“I am not on such terms with him as to be in his confidence.”

“Then you have not seen him?”

“I did not know he was here till I got back from my rounds in the forest,” said Michu, reloading his gun.

“He has sent to Arcis for Monsieur Grévin,” said Violette; “they are scheming something.”

“If you are going round by Cinq-Cygne, take me up behind you,” said the bailiff. “I’m going there.”

Violette was too timid to have a man of Michu’s strength on his crupper, and he spurred his beast. Judas slung his gun over his shoulder and walked rapidly up the avenue.

“Who can it be that Michu is angry with?” said Marthe to her mother.

“Ever since he heard of Monsieur Malin’s arrival he has been gloomy,” replied the old woman. “But it is getting damp here, let us go in.”

After the two women had settled themselves in the chimney corner they heard Courant’s bark.

“There’s my husband returning!” cried Marthe.

Michu passed up the stairs; his wife, uneasy, followed him to their bedroom.

"See if any one is about," he said to her, in a voice of some emotion.

"No one," she replied. "Marianne is in the field with the cow, and Gaucher —"

"Where is Gaucher?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"I distrust that little scamp. Go up in the garret, look in the hay-loft, look everywhere for him."

Marthe left the room to obey the order. When she returned she found Michu on his knees, praying.

"What is the matter?" she said, frightened.

The bailiff took his wife round the waist and drew her to him, saying in a voice of deep feeling: "If we never see each other again remember, my poor wife, that I loved you well. Follow minutely the instructions which you will find in a letter buried at the foot of the larch in that copse. It is inclosed in a tin tube. Do not touch it till after my death. And remember, Marthe, whatever happens to me, that in spite of man's injustice, my arm has been the instrument of the justice of God."

Marthe, who turned pale by degrees, became white as her own linen; she looked at her husband with fixed eyes widened by fear; she tried to speak, but her throat was dry. Michu disappeared like a shadow, having

tied Couraut to the foot of his bed where the dog, after the manner of all dogs, howled in despair.

Michu's anger against Monsieur Marion had serious grounds, but it was now concentrated on another man, far more criminal in his eyes, — on Malin, whose secrets were known to the bailiff, he being in a better position than others to understand the conduct of the State Councillor. Michu's father-in-law had had, politically speaking, the confidence of the former representative to the Convention, through Grévin.

Perhaps it would be well here to relate the circumstances which brought the Simeuse and Cinq-Cygne families into connection with Malin, — circumstances which weighed heavily on the fate of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's twin cousins, but still more heavily on that of Marthe and Michu.

The Cinq-Cygne mansion at Troyes stands opposite to that of Simeuse. When the populace, incited by minds that were as shrewd as they were cautious, pillaged the hôtel Simeuse, discovered the marquis and marchioness, who were accused of corresponding with the nation's enemies, and delivered them to the national guards who took them to prison, the crowd shouted, "Now for the Cinq-Cygnés!" To their minds the Cinq-Cygnés were as guilty as other aristocrats. The brave and worthy Marquis de Simeuse in the endeavor to save his two sons, then eighteen years of age, whose

courage was likely to compromise them, had confided them, a few hours before the storm broke, to their aunt, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne. Two servants attached to the Simeuse family accompanied the young men to her house. The old marquis, who was anxious that his name should not die out, requested that what was happening might be concealed from his sons, even in the event of dire disaster. Laurence, the only daughter of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, was then twelve years of age; her cousins both loved her and she loved them equally. Like other twins the Simeuse brothers were so alike that for a long while their mother dressed them in different colors to know them apart. The first comer, the eldest, was named Paul-Marie, the other Marie-Paul. Laurence de Cinq-Cygne, to whom their danger was revealed, played her woman's part well though still a mere child. She coaxed and petted her cousins and kept them occupied until the very moment when the populace surrounded the Cinq-Cygne mansion. The two brothers then knew their danger for the first time, and looked at each other. Their resolution was instantly taken; they armed their own servants and those of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, barricaded the doors, and stood guard at the windows, after closing the wooden blinds, with the five men-servants and the Abbé d'Hauteserre, a relative of the Cinq-Cygnés. These eight courageous champions poured a deadly fire into the

crowd. Every shot killed or wounded an assailant. Laurence, instead of wringing her hands, loaded the guns with extraordinary coolness, and passed the balls and powder to those who needed them. The Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne was on her knees.

“What are you doing, mother?” said Laurence.

“I am praying,” she answered, “for them and for you.”

Sublime words, — said also by the mother of Godoy, prince of the Peace, in Spain, under similar circumstances.

In a moment eleven persons were killed and lying on the ground among a number of wounded. Such results either cool or excite a populace; either it grows savage at the work or discontinues it. On the present occasion those in advance recoiled; but the crowd behind them were there to kill and rob, and when they saw their own dead, they cried out: “Murder! Murder! Revenge!” The wiser heads went in search of the representative to the Convention, Malin. The twins, by this time aware of the disastrous events of the day, suspected Malin of desiring the ruin of their family, and of causing the arrest of their parents, and the suspicion soon became a certainty. They posted themselves beneath the porte-cochère, gun in hand, intending to kill Malin as soon as he made his appearance; but the countess lost her head; she imagined her house in ashes

and her daughter assassinated, and she blamed the young men for their heroic defence and compelled them to desist. It was Laurence who opened the door slightly when Malin summoned the household to admit him. Seeing her, the representative relied upon the awe he expected to inspire in a mere child, and he entered the nouse. To his first words of inquiry as to why the family were making such resistance, the girl replied: "If you really desire to give liberty to France how is it that you do not protect us in our homes? They are trying to tear down this house, monsieur, to murder us, and you say we have no right to oppose force to force!"

Malin stood rooted to the ground.

"You, the son of a mason employed by the Grand Marquis to build his castle!" exclaimed Marie-Paul, "you have let them drag our father to prison — you have believed calumnies!"

"He shall be released at once," said Malin, who thought himself lost when he saw each youth clutch his weapon convulsively.

"You owe your life to that promise," said Marie-Paul, solemnly. "If it is not fulfilled to-night we shall find you again."

"As to that howling populace," said Laurence, "If you do not send them away, the next blood will be yours. Now, Monsieur Malin, leave this house!"

The Conventionalist did leave it, and he harangued

the crowd, dwelling on the sacred rights of the domestic hearth, the habeas corpus and the English "home." He told them that the law and the people were sovereigns, that the law *was* the people, and that the people could act only through the law, and that power was vested in the law. The particular law of personal necessity made him eloquent, and he managed to disperse the crowd. But he never forgot the contemptuous expression of the two brothers, nor the "Leave this house!" of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Therefore, when it was a question of selling the estates of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, Laurence's brother, as national property, the sale was rigorously made. The agents left nothing for Laurence but the château, the park and gardens, and one farm called that of Cinq-Cygne. Malin instructed the appraisers that Laurence had no rights beyond her legal share, — the nation taking possession of all that belonged to her brother, who had emigrated and, above all, had borne arms against the Republic.

The evening after this terrible tumult, Laurence so entreated her cousins to leave the country, fearing treachery on the part of Malin, or some trap into which they might fall, that they took horse that night and gained the Prussian outposts. They had scarcely reached the forest of Gondreville before the hôtel Cinq-Cygne was surrounded; Malin came himself to arrest the heirs of the house of Simense. He dared not lay

hands on the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, who was in bed with a nervous fever, nor on Laurence, a child of twelve. The servants, fearing the severity of the Republic, had disappeared. The next day the news of the resistance of the brothers and their flight to Prussia was known to the neighborhood. A crowd of three thousand persons assembled before the hôtel de Cinq-Cygne, which was demolished with incredible rapidity. Madame de Cinq-Cygne, carried to the hôtel Simeuse, died there from the effects of the fever aggravated by terror.

Michu did not appear in the political arena until after these events, for the marquis and his wife remained in prison over five months. During this time Malin was away on a mission. But when Monsieur Marion sold Gondreville to the Councillor of State, Michu understood the latter's game, — or rather, he thought he did ; for Malin was, like Fouché, one of those personages who are of such depth in all their different aspects that they are impenetrable when they play a part, and are never understood until long after their drama is ended.

In all the chief circumstances of Malin's life he had never failed to consult his faithful friend Grévin, the notary of Arcis, whose judgment on men and things was, at a distance, clear-cut and precise. This faculty is the wisdom and makes the strength of second-rate men. Now, in November, 1803, a combination of



events (already related in the "Député d'Arcis") made matters so serious for the Councillor of State that a letter might have compromised the two friends. Malin, who hoped to be appointed senator, was afraid to offer his explanations in Paris. He came to Gondreville, giving the First Consul only one of the reasons that made him wish to be there; that reason gave him an appearance of zeal in the eyes of Bonaparte; whereas his journey, far from concerning the interests of the State, related to his own interests only. On this particular day, as Michu was watching the park and expecting, after the manner of a red Indian, a propitious moment for his vengeance, the astute Malin, accustomed to turn all events to his own profit, was leading his friend Grévin to a little field in the English garden, a lonely spot in the park, favorable for secret conference. There, standing in the centre of the grass plot and speaking low, the friends were at too great a distance to be overheard if any one were lurking near enough to listen to them; they were also sure of time to change the conversation if others unwarily approached.

"Why could n't we have stayed in a room in the château?" asked Grévin.

"Did n't you take notice of those two men whom the prefect of police has sent here to me?"

Though Fouché made himself in the matter of the Fiehegru, Georges, Moreau, and Polignac conspiracy

the soul of the Consular cabinet, he did not at this control the ministry of police, but was merely a councillor of State like Malin.

"Those men," continued Malin, "are Fouché's two arms. One, that young dandy Corentin, whose face is like a glass of lemonade, vinegar on his lips and verjuice in his eyes, put an end to the insurrection at the West in the year VII. in less than fifteen days. The other is a disciple of Lenoir; he is the only one who preserves the great traditions of the police. I had asked for an agent of no great account, backed by some official personage, and they send me those past-masters of the business! Ah, Grévin, Fouché wants to pry into my game. That's why I left those fellows dining at the château; they may look into everything for all I care; they won't find Louis XVIII. nor any sign of him."

"But see here, my dear fellow, what game are you playing?" cried Grévin.

"Ha, my friend, a double game is a dangerous one, but this, taking Fouché into account, is a triple one. He may have nosed the fact that I am in the secrets of the house of Bourbon."

"You?"

"I," replied Malin.

"Have you forgotten Favras?"

The words made an impression on the councillor.

“ Since when ? ” asked Grévin, after a pause.

“ Since the Consulate for life.”

“ I hope there ’s no proof of it ? ”

“ Not that ! ” said Malin, clicking his thumb-nail against his teeth.

In few words the Councillor of State gave a clear and succinct account of the critical position in which Bonaparte was about to hold England, by threatening her with invasion from the camp at Boulogne ; he explained to Grévin the bearings of that project, which was unobserved by France and Europe but suspected by Pitt ; also the critical position in which England was about to put Bonaparte. A powerful coalition, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, paid by English gold, was pledged to furnish seven hundred thousand men under arms. At the same time a formidable conspiracy was throwing a network over the whole of France, including among its members montagnards, chouans, royalists, and their princes.

“ Louis XVIII. held that as long as there were three Consuls anarchy was certain, and that he could at some opportune moment take his revenge for the 13th Vendémiaire and the 18th Fructidor,” said Malin, “ but the Consulate for life has unmasked Bonaparte’s intentions — he will soon be emperor. The late sub-lieutenant means to create a dynasty ! This time his life is in actual danger ; and the plot is far better laid than

that of the Rue Saint-Nicaise. Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, the Duc d'Enghien, Polignac and Rivière, the two friends of the Comte d'Artois are in it."

"What an amalgamation!" cried Grévin.

"France is being silently invaded; no stone is left unturned; the thing will be carried with a rush. A hundred picked men, commanded by Georges, are to attack the Consular guard and the Consul hand to hand."

"Well then, denounce them."

"For the last two months the Consul, his minister of police, the prefect and Fouché, hold some of the clues of this vast conspiracy; but they don't know its full extent, and at this particular moment they are leaving nearly all the conspirators free, so as to discover more about it."

"As to rights," said the notary, "the Bourbons have much more right to conceive, plan, and execute a scheme against Bonaparte, than Bonaparte had on the 18th Brumaire against the Republic, whose product he was. He murdered his mother on that occasion, but these royalists only seek to recover what was theirs. I can understand that the princes and their adherents, seeing the lists of the *émigrés* closed, mortgages suppressed, the Catholic faith restored, anti-revolutionary decrees accumulating, should begin to see that their return is becoming difficult, not to say impossible.

Bonaparte being the sole obstacle now in their way, they want to get rid of him — nothing simpler. Conspirators if defeated are brigands, if successful, heroes ; and your perplexity seems to me very natural."

"The matter now is," said Malin, "to make Bonaparte fling the head of the Duc d'Enghien at the Bourbons, just as the Convention flung the head of Louis XVI. at the kings, so as to commit him as fully as we are to the Revolution ; *or else*, we must upset the idol of the French people and their future emperor, and seat the true throne upon his ruins. I am at the mercy of some event, some fortunate pistol-shot, some infernal machine which does its work. Even I don't know the whole conspiracy ; they don't tell me all ; but they have asked me to call the Council of State at the critical moment and direct its action towards the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Wait," said the notary.

"Impossible ! I am compelled to make my decision at once."

"Why ?"

"Well, the Simeuse brothers are in the conspiracy ; they are here in the neighborhood ; I must either have them watched, let them compromise themselves, and so be rid of them, or else I must privately protect them. I asked the prefect for underlings and he has sent me lynxes, who came through Troyes and have got the gendarmerie to support them."

“Gondreville is your real object,” said Grévin, thoughtfully, “and this conspiracy your best chance of keeping it. Fouché, Talleyrand, and those two fellows have nothing to do with that. Therefore play fair with them. What nonsense! those who cut Louis XVI.’s head off are in the government; France is full of men who have bought national property, and yet you talk of bringing back those who would require you to give up Gondreville! If the Bourbons were not imbeciles they would pass a sponge over all we have done. Warn Bonaparte, that’s my advice.”

“A man of my rank can’t denounce,” said Malin, quickly.

“Your rank!” exclaimed Grévin, smiling.

“They have offered to make me Keeper of the Seals.”

“Ah! Now I understand your bewilderment, and it is for me to see clear in this political darkness and find a way out for you. Now, it is quite impossible to foresee what events may happen to bring back the Bourbons when a General Bonaparte is in possession of eighty line of battle ships and four hundred thousand men. The most difficult thing of all in expectant politics is to know when a power that totters will fall; but, my old man, Bonaparte’s power is not tottering, it is in the ascendant. Don’t you think that Fouché may be sounding you so as to get to the bottom of your mind, and then get rid of you?”

“No ; I am sure of my go-between. Besides, Fouché would never, under those circumstances, send me such fellows as these ; he would know they would make me suspicious.”

“They alarm me,” said Grévin. “If Fouché does not distrust you, and is not seeking to probe you, why does he send them? Fouché does n’t play such a trick as that without a motive ; what is it?”

“What decides me,” said Malin, “is that I should never be easy with those two Simeuse brothers in France. Perhaps Fouché, who knows how I am placed towards them, wants to make sure they don’t escape him, and hopes through them to reach the Condés.”

“That’s right, old fellow ; it is not under Bonaparte that the present possessor of Gondreville can be ousted.”

Just then Malin, happening to look up, saw the muzzle of a gun through the foliage of a tall linden.

“I was not mistaken, I thought I heard the click of a trigger,” he said to Grévin, after getting behind the trunk of a large tree, where the notary, uneasy at his friend’s sudden movement, followed him.

“It is Michu,” said Grévin ; “I see his red beard.”

“Don’t let us seem afraid,” said Malin, who walked slowly away, saying at intervals : “Why is that man so bitter against the owners of this property? It was not you he was covering. If he overheard us he had

better ask the prayers of the congregation! Who the devil would have thought of looking up into the trees!"

"There's always something to learn," said the notary. "But he was a good distance off, and we spoke low."

"I shall tell Corentin about it," replied Malin.



## III.

## THE MASK THROWN OFF.

A FEW moments later Michu returned home, his face pale, his features contracted.

“What is the matter?” said his wife, frightened.

“Nothing,” he replied, seeing Violette whose presence silenced him.

Michu took a chair and sat down quietly before the fire, into which he threw a letter which he drew from a tin tube such as are given to soldiers to hold their papers. This act, which enabled Marthe to draw a long breath like one relieved of a great burden, greatly puzzled Violette. The bailiff laid his gun on the mantel-shelf with admirable composure. Marianne the servant, and Marthe’s mother were spinning by the light of a lamp.

“Come, François,” said the father, presently, “it is time to go to bed.”

He lifted the boy roughly by the middle of his body and carried him off.

“Run down to the cellar,” he whispered, when they reached the stairs. “Empty one third out of two bottles of the Macon wine, and fill up with the Cognac

brandy which is on the shelf. Then mix a bottle of white wine with one half brandy. Do it neatly, and put the three bottles on the empty cask which stands by the cellar door. When you hear me open the window in the kitchen come out of the cellar, run to the stable, saddle my horse, mount it, and go and wait for me at Poteaundes-Gueux — That little scamp hates to go to bed," said Michu, returning; "he likes to do as grown people do, see all, hear all, and know all. You spoil my people, père Violette."

"Goodness!" cried Violette, "what has loosened your tongue? I never heard you say as much before."

"Do you suppose I let myself be spied upon without taking notice of it? You are on the wrong side, père Violette. If, instead of serving those who hate me, you were on my side I could do better for you than renew that lease of yours."

"How?" said the peasant, opening wide his avaricious eyes.

"I'll sell you my property cheap."

"Nothing is cheap when we have to pay," said Violette, sententiously

"I want to leave the neighborhood, and I'll let you have my farm of Mousseau, the buildings, granary, and cattle for fifty thousand francs."

"Really?"

"Does that suit you?"

“ Hang it! I must think — ”

“ We ’ll talk about it — I shall want earnest money.”

“ I have no money.”

“ Well, a note.”

“ Can’t give it.”

“ Tell me who sent you here to-day.”

“ I am on my way back from where I went this afternoon, and I only stopped in to say good-evening.”

“ Back without your horse? What a fool you must take me for! You are lying, and you shall not have my farm.”

“ Well, to tell you the truth, it was Monsieur Grévin who sent me. He said ‘Violette, we want Michu; do you go and get him; if he is n’t at home, wait for him.’ I saw I should have to stay here all this evening.”

“ Are those sharks from Paris still at the château?”

“ Ah! that I don’t know; but there were people in the salon.”

“ You shall have my farm; we ’ll settle the terms now. Wife, go and get some wine to wash down the contract. Take the best Roussillon, the wine of the ex-marquis, — we are not babes. You ’ll find a couple of bottles on the empty cask near the door, and a bottle of white wine.”

“ Very good,” said Violette, who never got drunk.  
“ Let us drink.”

“ You have fifty thousand francs beneath the floor of

your bedroom under your bed, père Violette ; you will give them to me two weeks after we sign the deed of sale before Grévin —” Violette stared at Michu and grew livid. “ Ah ! you came here to spy upon a Jacobin who had the honor to be president of the club at Arcis, and you imagine he will let you get the better of him ! I have eyes, I saw where your tiles have been freshly cemented, and I concluded that you did not pry them up to plant wheat under there. Come, drink.”

Violette, much troubled, drank a large glass of wine without noticing the quality ; terror had put a hot iron in his stomach, the brandy was not hotter than his cupidity. He would have given many things to be safely home and able to change the hiding-place of his treasure. The three women smiled.

“ Do you like that wine ? ” said Michu, refilling his glass.

“ Yes, I do.”

After a good half-hour's discussion on the time when the buyer might take possession, and on the various punctilios which the peasantry bring forward when concluding a bargain, — in the midst of assertions and counter-assertions, the filling and emptying of glasses, the giving of promises and denials, Violette suddenly fell forward with his head on the table, not tipsy, but dead-drunk. The instant that Michu saw his eyes blur he opened the window.

“Where’s that scamp Gaucher?” he said to his wife.

“In bed.”

“You, *Marianne*,” said the bailiff to his faithful servant, “stand in front of his door and watch him. You, mother, stay down here, and keep an eye on this spy; keep your eyes and ears open and don’t unfasten the door to any one but *François*. It is a question of life or death,” he added, in a deep voice. “Every creature beneath my roof must remember that I have not quitted it this night; all of you must assert that — even though your heads were on the block. Come,” he said to *Marthe*, “come, wife, put on your shoes, take your cor’ and let us be off! No questions — I go with you.”

For the last three quarters of an hour the man’s demeanor and glance were of despotic authority, all-powerful, irresistible, drawn from the same mysterious source from which great generals on fields of battle who inflame an army, great orators inspiring vast audiences, and (it must be said) great criminals perpetrating bold crimes derive their inspiration. At such times invincible influence seems to exhale from the head and issue from the tongue; the gesture even can inject the will of the one man into others. The three women knew that some dreadful crisis was at hand: without warning of its nature they felt it in the rapid actions of the man, whose countenance shone, whose forehead

spoke, whose brilliant eyes glittered like stars; they saw it in the sweat that covered his brow to the roots of his hair, while more than once his voice vibrated with impatience and fury. Marthe obeyed passively. Armed to the teeth and with his gun over his shoulder Michu, dashed into the avenue, followed by his wife. They soon reached the cross-roads where François was in waiting hidden among the bushes.

“The boy is intelligent,” said Michu, when he caught sight of him.

These were his first words. His wife had rushed after him, unable to speak.

“Go back to the house, hide in a thick tree, and watch the country and the park,” he said to his son. “We have all gone to bed, no one is stirring. Your grandmother will not open the door until you ask her to let you in. Remember every word I say to you. The life of your father and your mother depends on it. No one must know we did not sleep at home.”

After whispering these words to the boy, who instantly disappeared in the forest like an eel in the mud, Michu turned to his wife.

“Mount behind me,” he said, “and pray that God be with us. Sit firm, the beast may die of it.” So saying he kicked the horse with both heels, pressing him with his powerful knees, and the animal sprang forward with the rapidity of a hunter, seeming to under-

stand what his master wanted of him, and crossed the forest in fifteen minutes. Then Michu, who had not swerved from the shortest way, pulled up, found a spot at the edge of the woods from which he could see the roofs of the château of Cinq-Cygne lighted by the moon, tied his horse to a tree, and followed by his wife, gained a little eminence which overlooked the valley.

The château, which Marthe and Michu looked at together for a moment, makes a charming effect in the landscape. Though it has little extent and is of no importance whatever as architecture, yet archæologically it is not without a certain interest. This old edifice of the fifteenth century, placed on an eminence, surrounded on all sides by a moat, or rather by deep, wide ditches always full of water, is built in cobblestones buried in cement, the walls being seven feet thick. Its simplicity recalls the rough and warlike life of feudal days. The château, plain and unadorned, has two large reddish towers at either end, connected by a long main building with casement windows, the stone mullions of which, being roughly carved, bear some resemblance to vine-shoots. The stairway is outside the house, at the middle, in a sort of pentagonal tower entered through a small arched door. The interior of the ground-floor together with the rooms on the first story were modernized in the time of Louis XIV., and the whole building is surmounted by an immense roof

broken by casement windows with carved triangular pediments. Before the castle lies a vast green sward the trees of which had recently been cut down. On either side of the entrance bridge are two small dwellings where the gardeners live, connected across the road by a paltry iron railing without character, evidently modern. To right and left of the lawn, which is divided in two by a paved road-way, are the stables, cow-sheds, barns, wood-house, bakery, poultry-yard, and the offices, placed in what were doubtless the remains of two wings of the old building similar to those that were still standing. The two large towers, with their pepper-pot roofs which had not been rased, and the belfry of the middle tower, gave an air of distinction to the village. The church, also very old, showed near by its pointed steeple, which harmonized well with the solid masses of the castle. The moon brought out in full relief the various roofs and towers on which it played and sparkled.

Michu gazed at this baronial structure in a manner that upset all his wife's ideas about him; his face, now calm, wore a look of hope and also a sort of pride. His eyes scanned the horizon with a glance of defiance; he listened for sounds in the air. It was now nine o'clock; the moon was beginning to cast its light upon the margin of the forest and to illumine the little bluff on which they stood. The position struck him as dangerous and



he left it, fearful of being seen. But no suspicious noise troubled the peace of the beautiful valley encircled on this side by the forest of Nodesme. Marthe, exhausted and trembling, was awaiting some explanation of their hurried ride. What was she engaged in? Was she to aid in a good deed or an evil one? At that instant Michu bent to his wife's ear and whispered: —

“Go to the house and ask to speak to the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne; when you see her beg her to speak to you alone. If no one can overhear you, say to her: ‘Mademoiselle, the lives of your two cousins are in danger, and he who can explain the how and why is waiting to speak to you.’ If she seems afraid, if she distrusts you, add these words: ‘They are conspiring against the First Consul and the conspiracy is discovered.’ Don’t give your name; they distrust us too much.”

Marthe raised her face towards her husband and said: —

“Can it be that you serve them?”

“What if I do?” he said, frowning, taking her words as a reproach.

“You don’t understand me,” cried Marthe, seizing his large hand and falling on her knees beside him as she kissed it and covered it with her tears.

“Go, go, you shall cry later,” he said, kissing her vehemently.

When he no longer heard her step his eyes filled with tears. He had distrusted Marthe on account of her father's opinions; he had hidden the secrets of his life from her; but the beauty of her simple nature had suddenly appeared to him, just as the grandeur of his had, as suddenly, revealed itself to her. Marthe had passed in a moment from the deep humiliation caused by the degradation of the man whose name she bore, to the exaltation given by a sense of his nobleness. The change was instantaneous, without transition; it was enough to make her tremble. She told him later that she went, as it were, through blood from the pavilion to the edge of the forest, and there was lifted to heaven, in a moment, among the angels. Michu, who had known he was not appreciated, and who mistook his wife's grieved and melancholy manner for lack of affection, and had left her to herself, living chiefly out of doors and reserving all his tenderness for his boy, instantly understood the meaning of her tears. She had cursed the part which her beauty and her father's will had forced her to take; but now happiness, in the midst of this great storm, played, with a beautiful flame like a vivid lightning, about them. And it was lightning! Each thought of the ten years of misconception, and they blamed themselves only. Michu stood motionless, his elbow on his gun, his chin on his elbow, lost in deep revery. Such a moment in a man's life

makes him willing to accept the saddest moments of a painful past.

Marthe, agitated by the same thoughts as those of her husband, was also troubled in heart by the danger of the Simeuse brothers; for she now understood all, even the faces of the two Parisians, though she still could not explain to herself her husband's gun. She darted forward like a doe, and soon reached the road to the château. There she was surprised by the steps of a man following behind her; she turned, with a cry, and her husband's large hand closed her mouth.

"From the hill up there I saw the silver lace of the gendarmes' hats. Go in by the breach in the moat between Mademoiselle's tower and the stables. The dogs won't bark at you. Go through the garden and call the countess by the window; order them to saddle her horse, and ask her to come out through the breach. I'll be there, after discovering what the Parisians are planning and how to escape them."

Danger, which seemed to be rolling like an avalanche upon them, gave wings to Marthe's feet.

## IV.

## LAURENCE DE CINQ-CYGNE.

THE old Frank name of the Cinq-Cygnés and the Chargebœufs was Duineff. Cinq-Cygne became that of the younger branch of the Chargebœufs after the defence of a castle made, during their father's absence, by five daughters of that race, all remarkably fair, and of whom no one expected such heroism. One of the first Comtes de Champagne wished, by bestowing this pretty name, to perpetuate the memory of their deed as long as the family existed. Laurence, the last of her race, was, contrary to Salic law, heiress of the name, the arms, and the manor. She was therefore Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne in her own right; her husband would have to take both her name and her blazon, which bore for device the glorious answer made by the elder of the five sisters when summoned to surrender the castle, "We die singing." Worthy descendant of these noble heroines, Laurence was fair and lily-white as though nature had made her for a wager. The lines of her blue veins could be seen through the delicate close texture of her skin. Her beautiful golden hair harmonized delightfully with eyes of the deepest blue. Everything

about her belonged to the type of delicacy. Within that fragile though active body, and in defiance as it were of its pearly whiteness, lived a soul like that of a man of noble nature; but no one, not even a close observer, would have suspected it from the gentle countenance and rounded features which, when seen in profile, bore some slight resemblance to those of a lamb. This extreme gentleness, though noble, had something of the stupidity of the little animal. "I look like a dreamy sheep," she would say, smiling. Laurence, who talked little, seemed not so much dreamy as dormant. But, did any important circumstance arise, the hidden Judith was revealed, sublime; and circumstances had, unfortunately, not been wanting.

At thirteen years of age, Laurence, after the events already related, was an orphan living in a house opposite to the empty space where so recently had stood one of the most curious specimens in France of sixteenth-century architecture, the hôtel Cinq-Cygne. Monsieur d'Hauteserre, her relation, now her guardian, took the young heiress to live in the country at her château of Cinq-Cygne. That brave provincial gentleman, alarmed at the death of his brother, the Abbé d'Hauteserre, who was shot in the open square as he was about to escape in the dress of a peasant, was not in a position to defend the interests of his ward. He had two sons in the army of the princes, and every day, at

the slightest unusual sound, he believed that the municipals of Arcis were coming to arrest him. Laurence, proud of having sustained a siege and of possessing the historic whiteness of her swan-like ancestors, despised the prudent cowardice of the old man who bent to the storm, and dreamed only of distinguishing herself. So, she boldly hung the portrait of Charlotte Corday on the walls of her poor salon at Cinq-Cygne, and crowned it with oak leaves. She corresponded by messenger with her twin cousins, in defiance of the law, which punished the act, when discovered, with death. The messenger, who risked his life, brought back the answers. Laurence lived only, after the catastrophes at Troyes, for the triumph of the royal cause. After soberly judging Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre (who lived with her at the château de Cinq-Cygne), and recognizing their honest, but stolid natures, she put them outside the lines of her own life. She had, however, too good a mind and too sound a judgment to complain of their natures; always kind, amiable, and affectionate towards them, she nevertheless told them none of her secrets. Nothing forms a character so much as the practice of constant concealment in the bosom of a family.

After she attained her majority Laurence allowed Monsieur d'Hauteserre to manage her affairs as in the past. So long as her favorite mare was well-groomed,

her maid Catherine dressed to please her, and Gothard the little page was suitably clothed, she cared for nothing else. Her thoughts were aimed too high to come down to occupations and interests which in other times than these would doubtless have pleased her. Dress was a small matter to her mind ; moreover her cousins were not there to see her. She wore a dark-green habit when she rode, and a gown of some common woollen stuff with a cape trimmed with braid when she walked ; in the house she was always seen in a silk wrapper. Gothard, the little groom, a brave and clever lad of fifteen, attended her wherever she went, and she was nearly always out of doors, riding or hunting over the farms of Gondreville, without objection being made by either Michu or the farmers. She rode admirably well, and her cleverness in hunting was thought miraculous. In the country she was never called anything but “*Mademoiselle*” even during the Revolution.

Whoever has read the fine romance of “*Rob Roy*” will remember that rare woman for whose making Walter Scott’s imagination abandoned its customary coldness, — Diana Vernon. The recollection will serve to make Laurence understood if, to the noble qualities of the Scottish huntress you add the restrained exaltation of Charlotte Corday, suppressing, however, the charming vivacity which rendered Diana so attractive. The young countess had seen her mother die, the Abbé

d'Hauteserre shot down, the Marquis de Simeuse and his wife executed; her only brother had died of his wounds; her two cousins serving in Condé's army might be killed at any moment; and, finally, the fortunes of the Simeuse and the Cinq-Cygne families had been seized and wasted by the Republic without being of any benefit to the nation. Her grave demeanor, now lapsing into apparent stolidity, can be readily understood.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre proved an upright and most careful guardian. Under his administration Cinq-Cygne became a sort of farm. The good man, who was far more of a close manager than a knight of the old nobility, had turned the park and gardens to profit, and used their two hundred acres of grass and woodland as pasturage for horses and fuel for the family. Thanks to his severe economy the countess, on coming of age, had recovered by his investments in the State funds a competent fortune. In 1798 she possessed about twenty thousand francs a year from those sources, on which, in fact, some dividends were still due, and twelve thousand francs a year from the rentals at Cinq-Cygne, which had lately been renewed at a notable increase. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had provided for their old age by the purchase of an annuity of three thousand francs in the Tontines Lafarge. That fragment of their former means did not enable them to live



elsewhere than at Cinq-Cygne, and Laurence's first act on coming to her majority was to give them the use for life of the wing of the château which they occupied.

The Hauteserres, as niggardly for their ward as they were for themselves, laid up every year nearly the whole of their annuity for the benefit of their sons, and kept the young heiress on miserable fare. The whole cost of the Cinq-Cygne household never exceeded five thousand francs a year. But Laurence, who condescended to no details, was satisfied. Her guardian and his wife, unconsciously ruled by the imperceptible influence of her strong character, which was felt even in little things, had ended by admiring her whom they had known and treated as a child, — a sufficiently rare feeling. But in her manner, her deep voice, her commanding eye, Laurence held that inexplicable power which rules all men, — even when its strength is mere appearance. To vulgar minds real depth is incomprehensible; it is perhaps for that reason that the populace is so prone to admire what it cannot understand. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, impressed by the habitual silence and erratic habits of the young girl, were constantly expecting some extraordinary thing of her.

Laurence, who did good intelligently and never allowed herself to be deceived, was held in the utmost respect by the peasantry although she was an aristocrat. Her sex, name, and great misfortunes, also the

originality of her present life, contributed to give her authority over the inhabitants of the valley of Cinq-Cygne. She was sometimes absent for two days, attended by Gothard, but neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre questioned her, on her return, as to the reasons of her absence. Please observe, however, that there was nothing odd or eccentric about Laurence. What she was and what she did was masked, as it were, by a feminine and even fragile appearance. Her heart was full of extreme sensibility, though her head contained a stoical firmness and the virile gift of resolution. Her clear-seeing eyes knew not how to weep; but no one would have imagined that the delicate white wrist with its tracery of blue veins could defy that of the boldest horseman. Her hand, so noble, so flexible, could handle gun or pistol with the ease of a practised marksman. She always wore when out of doors the coquettish little cap with visor and green veil which women wear on horseback. Her delicate fair face, thus protected, and her white throat tied with a black cravat, were never injured by her long rides in all weathers.

Under the Directory and at the beginning of the Consulate, Laurence had been able to escape the observation of others; but since the government had become a more settled thing, the new authorities, the prefect of the Aube, Malin's friends, and Malin himself had endeavored to undermine her in the community. Her

preoccupying thought was the overthrow of Bonaparte, whose ambition and its triumphs excited the anger of her soul, — a cold, deliberate anger. The obscure and hidden enemy of a man at the pinnacle of glory, she kept her gaze upon him from the depths of her valley and her forests, with relentless fixity ; there were times when she thought of killing him in the roads about Malmaison or Saint-Cloud. Plans for the execution of this idea may have been the cause of many of her past actions, but having been initiated, after the peace of Amiens, into the conspiracy of the men who expected to make the 18th Brumaire recoil upon the First Consul, she had thenceforth subordinated her faculties and her hatred to their vast and well laid scheme, which was to strike at Bonaparte externally by the vast coalition of Russia, Austria, and Prussia (vanquished at Austerlitz) and internally by the coalition of men politically opposed to each other, but united by their common hatred to a man whose death some of them were meditating, like Laurence herself, without shrinking from the word assassination. This young girl, so fragile to the eye, so powerful to those who knew her well, was at the present moment the faithful guide and assistant of the exiled gentlemen who came from England to take part in this deadly enterprise.

Fouché relied on the co-operation of the *émigrés* everywhere beyond the Rhine to lure the Duc d'Enghien

into the plot. The presence of that prince in the Baden territory, not far from Strasburg, gave much weight later to the accusation. The great question of whether the prince really knew of the enterprise, and was waiting on the frontier to enter France on its success, is one of those secrets about which, as about several others, the house of Bourbon has maintained an unbroken silence. As the history of that period recedes into the past, impartial historians will declare the imprudence, to say the least, of the Duc d'Enghien in placing himself close to the frontier at a time when a vast conspiracy was about to break forth, the secret of which was undoubtedly known to every member of the Bourbon family.

The caution which Malin displayed in talking with Grévin in the open air, Laurence applied to her every action. She met the emissaries and conferred with them either at various points in the Nodessme forest, or beyond the valley of Cinq-Cygne, between the villages of Sézanne and Brienne. Often she rode forty miles on a stretch with Gothard, and returned to Cinq-Cygne without the least sign of weariness or pre-occupation on her fair young face.

Some years earlier, Laurence had seen in the eyes of a little cow-boy, then nine years old, the artless admiration which children feel for everything that is out of the common way. She made him her page,

and taught him to groom a horse with the nicety and care of an Englishman. She saw in the lad a desire to do well, a bright intelligence, and a total absence of sly motives; she tested his devotion and found he had not only mind but nobility of character; he never dreamed of reward. The young girl trained this soul that was still so young; she was good to him, good with dignity; she attached him to her by attaching herself to him, and by herself polishing a nature that was half wild, without destroying its freshness or its simplicity. When she had sufficiently tested the almost canine fidelity she had nurtured, Gothard became her intelligent and ingenuous accomplice. The little peasant, whom no one could suspect, went from Cinq-Cygne to Nancy, and often returned before any one had missed him from the neighborhood. He knew how to practise all the tricks of a spy. The extreme distrust and caution his mistress had taught him did not change his natural self. Gothard, who possessed all the craft of a woman, the candor of a child, and the ceaseless observation of a conspirator, hid every one of these admirable qualities beneath the torpor and dull ignorance of a country lad. The little fellow had a silly, weak, and clumsy appearance; but once at work he was active as a fish; he escaped like an eel; he understood, as the dogs do, the merest glance; he nosed a thought. His good fat face, both round and

red, his sleepy brown eyes, his hair, cut in the peasant fashion, his clothes, and his slow growth gave him the appearance of a child of ten.


The two young d'Hauteserres and the twin brothers Simeuse, under the guidance of their cousin Laurence, who had been watching over their safety and that of the other *émigrés* who accompanied them from Strasbourg to Bar-sur-Aube, had just passed through Alsace and Lorraine, and were now in Champagne while other conspirators, not less bold, were entering France by the cliffs of Normandy. Dressed as workmen the d'Hauteserres and the Simeuse twins had walked from forest to forest, guided on their way by relays of persons, chosen by Laurence during the last three months from among the least suspected of the Bourbon adherents living in each neighborhood. The *émigrés* slept by day and travelled by night. Each brought with him two faithful soldiers; one of whom went before to warn of danger, the other behind to protect a retreat. Thanks to these military precautions, this valuable detachment had at last reached, without accident, the forest of Noddesme, which was chosen as the rendezvous. Twenty-seven other gentlemen had entered France from Switzerland and crossed Burgundy, guided towards Paris with the same caution.

Monsieur de Rivière counted on collecting five hundred men, one hundred of whom were young nobles,

the officers of this sacred legion. Monsieur de Polignac and Monsieur de Rivière, whose conduct as chiefs of this advance was most remarkable, afterwards preserved an impenetrable secrecy as to the names of those of their accomplices who were not discovered. It may be said, therefore, now that the Restoration has made matters clearer, that Bonaparte never knew the extent of the danger he then ran, any more than England knew the peril she had escaped from the camp at Boulogne; and yet the police of France was never more intelligently or ably managed.

At the period when this history begins, a coward—for cowards are always to be found in conspiracies which are not confined to a small number of equally strong men—a sworn confederate, brought face to face with death, gave certain information, happily insufficient to cover the extent of the conspiracy, but precise enough to show the object of the enterprise. The police had therefore, as Malin told Grévin, left the conspirators at liberty, though all the while watching them, hoping to discover the ramifications of the plot. Nevertheless, the government found its hand to a certain extent forced by Georges Cadoudal, a man of action who took counsel of himself only, and who was hiding in Paris with twenty-five *chouans* for the purpose of attacking the First Consul.

Laurence combined both hatred and love within her



breast. To destroy Bonaparte and bring back the Bourbons was to recover Gondreville and make the fortune of her cousins. The two sentiments, one the counterpart of the other, were sufficient, more especially at twenty-three years of age, to excite all the faculties of her soul and all the powers of her being. So, for the last two months, she had seemed to the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne more beautiful than at any other period of her life. Her cheeks became rosy; hope gave pride to her brow; but when old d'Hauteserre read the Gazette at night and discussed the conservative course of the First Consul she lowered her eyes to conceal her passionate hopes of the coming fall of that enemy of the Bourbons.

No one at the château had the faintest idea that the young countess had met her cousins the night before. The two sons of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had passed the preceding night in Laurence's own room, under the same roof with their father and mother; and Laurence, after knowing them safely in bed had gone between one and two o'clock in the morning to a rendezvous with her cousins in the forest, where she hid them in the deserted hut of a wood-dealer's agent. The following day, certain of seeing them again, she showed no signs of her joy; nothing about her betrayed emotion; she was able to efface all traces of pleasure at having met them again; in fact, she was impassible.



Catherine, her pretty maid, daughter of her former nurse, and Gothard, both in the secret, modelled their behavior upon hers. Catherine was nineteen years old. At that age a girl is a fanatic and would let her throat be cut before betraying a thought of one she loves. As for Gothard, merely to inhale the perfume which the countess used in her hair and among her clothes he would have borne the rack without a word.

## V.

ROYALIST HOMES AND PORTRAITS UNDER THE  
CONSULATE.

AT the moment when Marthe, driven by the imminence of the peril, was gliding with the rapidity of a shadow towards the breach of which Michu had told her, the salon of the château of Cinq-Cygne presented a peaceful sight. Its occupants were so far from suspecting the storm that was about to burst upon them that their quiet aspect would have roused the compassion of any one who knew their situation. In the large fireplace, the mantel of which was adorned with a mirror with shepherdesses in paniers painted on its frame, burned a fire such as can be seen only in châteaux bordering on forests. At the corner of this fireplace, on a large square sofa of gilded wood with a magnificent brocaded cover, the young countess lay as it were extended, in an attitude of utter weariness. Returning at six o'clock from the confines of Brie, having played the part of scout to the four gentlemen whom she guided safely to their last halting-place before they entered Paris, she had found Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre just finishing their dinner.

Pressed by hunger she sat down to table without changing either her muddy habit or her boots. Instead of doing so at once after dinner, she was suddenly overcome with fatigue and allowed her head with its beautiful fair curls to drop on the back of the sofa, her feet being supported in front of her by a stool. The warmth of the fire had dried the mud on her habit and on her boots. Her doeskin gloves and the little peaked cap with its green veil and a whip lay on the table where she had flung them. She looked sometimes at the old Boule clock which stood on the mantelshef between the candelabra, perhaps to judge if her four conspirators were asleep, and sometimes at the card-table in front of the fire where Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the curé of Cinq-Cygne, and his sister were playing a game of boston.

Even if these personages were not imbedded in this drama, their portraits would have the merit of representing one of the aspects of the aristocracy after its overthrow in 1793. From this point of view, a sketch of the salon at Cinq-Cygne has the raciness of history seen in dishabille.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre, then fifty-two years of age, tall, spare, high-colored, and robust in health, would have seemed the embodiment of vigor if it were not for a pair of porcelain blue eyes, the glance of which denoted the most absolute simplicity. In his face, which

ended in a long pointed chin, there was, judging by the rules of design, an unnatural distance between his nose and mouth which gave him a submissive air, wholly in keeping with his character, which harmonized, in fact, with other details of his appearance. His gray hair, flattened by his hat, which he wore nearly all day, looked much like a skull-cap on his head, and defined its pear-shaped outline. His forehead, much wrinkled by life in the open air and by constant anxieties, was flat and expressionless. His aquiline nose redeemed the face somewhat; but the sole indication of any strength of character lay in the bushy eyebrows which retained their blackness, and in the brilliant coloring of his skin. These signs were in some respects not misleading, for the worthy gentleman, though simple and very gentle, was Catholic and monarchical in faith, and no consideration on earth could make him change his views. Nevertheless he would have let himself be arrested without an effort at defence, and would have gone to the scaffold quietly. His annuity of three thousand francs had kept him from emigrating. He therefore obeyed the government *de facto* without ceasing to love the royal family and to pray for their return, though he would firmly have refused to compromise himself by any effort in their favor. He belonged to that class of royalists who ceaselessly remembered that they were beaten and

robbed ; and who remained thenceforth dumb, economical, rancorous, without energy ; incapable of abjuring the past, but equally incapable of sacrifice ; waiting to greet triumphant royalty ; true to religion and true to the priesthood, but firmly resolved to bear in silence the shocks of fate. Such an attitude cannot be considered that of maintaining opinions, it becomes sheer obstinacy. Action is the essence of party. Without intelligence, but loyal, miserly as a peasant yet noble in demeanor, bold in his wishes but discreet in word and action, turning all things to profit, willing even to be made mayor of Cinq-Cygne, Monsieur d'Hauteserre was an admirable representative of those honorable gentlemen on whose brow God himself has written the word *mites*, — Frenchmen who burrowed in their country homes and let the storms of the Revolution pass above their heads ; who came once more to the surface under the Restoration, rich with their hidden savings, proud of their discreet attachment to the monarchy, and who, after 1830, recovered their estates.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre's costume, expressive envelope of his distinctive character, described to the eye both the man and his period. He always wore one of those nut-colored great-coats with small collars which the Duc d'Orléans made the fashion after his return from England, and which were, during the Revolution, a sort of compromise between the hideous popular gar-

ments and the elegant surtouts of the aristocracy. His velvet waistcoat with flowered stripes, the style of which recalled those of Robespierre and Saint-Just, showed the upper part of a shirt-frill in fine plaits. He still wore brèeches ; but his were of coarse blue cloth, with burnished steel buckles. His stockings of black spun-silk defined his deer-like legs, the feet of which were shod in thick shoes, held in place by gaiters of black cloth. He retained the former fashion of a muslin cravat in innumerable folds fastened by a gold buckle at the throat. The worthy man had not intended an act of political eclecticism in adopting this costume, which combined the styles of peasant, revolutionist, and aristocrat ; he simply and innocently obeyed the dictates of circumstances.

Madame d'Hauteserre, forty years of age and wasted by emotions, had a faded face which seemed to be always posing for its portrait. A lace cap, trimmed with bows of white satin, contributed singularly to give her a solemn air. She still wore powder, in spite of a white kerchief, and a gown of puce-colored silk with tight sleeves and full skirt, the sad last garments of Marie-Antoinette. Her nose was pinched, her chin sharp, the whole face nearly triangular, the eyes worn-out with weeping ; but she now wore a touch of rouge which brightened their grayness. She took snuff, and each time that she did so she employed all the pretty precau-

tions of the fashionable women of her early days ; the details of this snuff-taking constituted a ceremony which could be explained by one fact — she had very pretty hands.

For the last two years the former tutor of the Simeuse twins, a friend of the late Abbé d'Hauteserre, named Goujet, Abbé des Minimes, had taken charge of the parish of Cinq-Cygne out of friendship for the d'Hauteserres and the young countess. His sister, Mademoiselle Goujet, who possessed a little income of seven hundred francs, added that sum to the meagre salary of her brother and kept his house. Neither church nor parsonage had been sold during the Revolution on account of their small value. The abbé and his sister lived close to the château, for the wall of the parsonage garden and that of the park were the same in some places. Twice a week the pair dined at the château, but they came every evening to play boston with the d'Hauteserres ; for Laurence, unable to play a game, did not even know one card from another.

The Abbé Goujet, an old man with white hair and a face as white as that of an old woman, endowed with a kindly smile and a gentle and persuasive voice, redeemed the insipidity of his rather mincing face by a fine intellectual brow and a pair of keen eyes. Of medium height, and very well made, he still wore the old-fashioned black coat, silver shoe-buckles, breeches,

black silk stockings, and a black waistcoat on which lay his clerical bands, giving him a distinguished air which detracted nothing from his dignity. This abbé, who became bishop of Troyes after the Restoration, had long made a study of young people and fully understood the noble character of the young countess; he appreciated her at her full value, and had shown her, from the first, a respectful deference which contributed much to her independence at Cinq-Cygne, for it led the austere old lady and the kind old gentleman to yield to the young girl, who by rights should have yielded to them. For the last six months the abbé had watched Laurence with the intuition peculiar to priests, the most sagacious of men; and although he did not know that this girl of twenty-three was thinking of overturning Bonaparte as she lay there twisting with slender fingers the frogged lacing of her riding-habit, he was well aware that she was agitated by some great project.

Mademoiselle Goujet was one of those unmarried women whose portrait can be drawn in one word which will enable the least imaginative mind to picture her; she was ungainly. She knew her own ugliness and was the first to laugh at it, showing her long teeth, yellow as her complexion and her bony hands. She was gay and hearty. She wore the famous short gown of former days, a very full skirt with pockets full of keys, a cap with ribbons and a false front. She was forty



years of age very early, but had, so she said, caught up with herself by keeping at that age for twenty years. She revered the nobility; and knew well how to preserve her own dignity by giving to persons of noble birth the respect and deference that were due to them.

This little company was a god-send to Madame d'Hauteserre, who had not, like her husband, rural occupations, nor, like Laurence, the tonic of hatred, to enable her to bear the dulness of a retired life. Many things had happened to ameliorate that life within the last six years. The restoration of Catholic worship allowed the faithful to fulfil their religious duties, which play more of a part in country life than elsewhere. Protected by the conservative edicts of the First Consul, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had been able to correspond with their sons, and no longer in dread of what might happen to them could even hope for the erasure of their names from the lists of the proscribed and their consequent return to France. The Treasury had lately made up the arrearages and now paid its dividends promptly; so that the d'Hauteserres received, over and above their annuity, about eight thousand francs a year. The old man congratulated himself on the sagacity of his foresight in having put all his savings, amounting to twenty thousand francs, together with those of his ward, in the public Funds

before the 18th Brumaire, which, as we all know, sent those stocks up from twelve to eighteen francs.

The château of Cinq-Cygne had long been empty and denuded of furniture. The prudent guardian was careful not to alter its aspect during the revolutionary troubles; but after the peace of Amiens he made a journey to Troyes and brought back various relics of the pillaged mansions which he obtained from the dealers in second-hand furniture. The salon was furnished for the first time since their occupation of the house. Handsome curtains of white brocade with green flowers, from the hôtel de Simeuse, draped the six windows of the salon, in which the family were now assembled. The walls of this vast room were entirely of wood, with panels encased in beaded mouldings with masks at the angles; the whole painted in two shades of gray. The spaces over the four doors were filled with those designs, painted in cameo of two colors, which were so much in vogue under Louis XV. Monsieur d'Hautesserre had picked up at Troyes certain gilded pier-tables, a sofa in green damask, a crystal chandelier, a card-table of marquetry, among other things that served him to restore the château. In 1792 all the furniture of the house had been taken or destroyed, for the pillage of the mansions in town was imitated in the valley. Each time that the old man went to Troyes he returned with some relic of the former splendor, some-

times a fine carpet for the floor of the salon, at other times part of a dinner service, or a bit of rare old porcelain of either Sèvres or Dresden. During the last six months he had ventured to dig up the family silver, which the cook had buried in the cellar of a little house belonging to him at the end of one of the long faubourgs in Troyes.

That faithful servant, named Durieu, and his wife had followed the fortunes of their young mistress. Durieu was the factotum of the château, and his wife was the housekeeper. He was helped in the cooking by the sister of Catherine, Laurence's maid, to whom he was teaching his art and who gave promise of becoming an excellent cook. An old gardener, his wife, a son paid by the day, and a daughter who served as a dairy-woman, made up the household. Madame Durieu had lately and secretly had the Cinq-Cygne liveries made for the gardener's son and for Gothard. Though blamed for this imprudence by Monsieur d'Hauterres, the housekeeper took great pleasure in seeing the dinner served on the festival of Saint-Laurence, the countess's fête-day, with almost as much style as in former times.

This slow and difficult restoration of departed things was the delight of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauterres and the Durieus. Laurence smiled at what she thought nonsense. But the worthy old d'Hauterres did not

forget the more solid matters ; he repaired the buildings, put up the walls, planted trees wherever there was a chance to make them grow, and did not leave an inch of unproductive land. The whole valley regarded him as an oracle in the matter of agriculture. He had managed to recover a hundred acres of contested land, not sold as national property, being in some way confounded with that of the township. This land he had turned into fields which afforded good pasturage for his horses and cattle, and he planted them round with poplars, which now, at the end of six years, were making a fine growth. He intended to buy back some of the lost estate, and to utilize all the out-buildings of the château by making a second farm and managing it himself.

Life at the château had thus become during the last two years prosperous and almost happy. Monsieur d'Hauteserre was off at daybreak to overlook his laborers, for he employed them in all weathers. He came home to breakfast, mounted his farm pony as soon as the meal was over, and made his rounds of the estate like a bailiff, — getting home in time for dinner, and finishing the day with a game of boston. All the inhabitants of the château had their stated occupations ; life was as closely regulated there as in a convent. Laurence alone disturbed its even tenor by her sudden jotrneys, her uncertain returns, and by what Madame d'Hauteserre

called her pranks. But with all this peacefulness there existed at Cinq-Cygne conflicting interests and certain causes of dissension. In the first place Durieu and his wife were jealous of Catherine and Gothard, who lived in greater intimacy with their young mistress, the idol of the household, than they did. Then the two d'Hauteserres, encouraged by Mademoiselle Goujet and the abbé, wanted their sons as well as the Simeuse brothers to take the oath and return to this quiet life, instead of living miserably in foreign countries. Laurence scouted the odious compromise and stood firmly for the monarchy, militant and implacable. The four old people, anxious that their present peaceful existence should not be risked, nor their spot of refuge, saved from the furious waters of the revolutionary torrent, lost, did their best to convert Laurence to their cautious views, believing that her influence counted for much in the unwillingness of their sons and the Simeuse twins to return to France. The superb disdain with which she met the project frightened these poor people, who were not mistaken in their fears that she was meditating what they called knight-errantry. This jarring of opinion came to the surface after the explosion of the infernal machine in the rue Saint-Nicaise, the first royalist attempt against the conqueror of Marengo after his refusal to treat with the house of Bourbon. The d'Hauteserres considered it fortunate that Bonaparte

escaped that danger, believing that the republicans had instigated it. But Laurence wept with rage when she heard he was safe. Her despair overcame her usual reticence, and she vehemently complained that God had deserted the sons of Saint-Louis.

“ I,” she exclaimed, “ I could have succeeded ! Have we no right,” she added, seeing the stupefaction her words produced on the faces about her, and addressing the abbé, “ no right to attack the usurper by every means in our power ? ”

“ My child,” replied the abbé, “ the Church has been greatly blamed by philosophers for declaring in former times that the same weapons might be employed against usurpers which the usurpers themselves had employed to succeed ; but in these days the Church owes far too much to the First Consul not to protect him against that maxim, — which, by the by, was due to the Jesuits.”

“ So the Church abandons us ! ” she answered, gloomily.

From that day forth whenever the four old people talked of submitting to the decrees of Providence, Laurence left the room. Of late, the abbé, shrewder than Monsieur d’Hauteserre, instead of discussing principles, drew pictures of the material advantages of the consular rule, less to convert the countess than to detect in her eyes some expression which might enlighten him as

to her projects. Gothard's frequent disappearances, the long rides of his mistress, and her evident preoccupation, which, for the last few days, had appeared in her face, together with other little signs not to be hidden in the silence and tranquillity of such a life, had roused the fears of these submissive royalists. Still, as no event happened, and perfect quiet appeared to reign in the political atmosphere, the minds of the little household were soothed into peace, and the countess's long rides were once more attributed to her passion for hunting.

It is easy to imagine the deep silence which reigned at nine o'clock in the evening in the park, courtyards, and gardens of Cinq-Cygne, where at that particular moment the persons we have described were harmoniously grouped, where perfect peace pervaded all things, where comfort and abundance were again enjoyed, and where the worthy and judicious old gentleman was still hoping to convert his late ward to his system of obedience to the ruling powers by the argument of what we may call the continuity of prosperous results.

These royalists continued to play their boston, a game which spread ideas of independence under a frivolous form over the whole of France ; for it was first invented in honor of the American insurgents, its very terms applying to the struggle which Louis XVI. encouraged. While making their " independences " and " poverties,"

the players kept an eye on the countess, who had fallen asleep, overcome by fatigue, with a singular smile on her lips, her last waking thought having been of the terror two words could inspire in the minds of the peaceful company by informing the d'Hauterres that their sons had passed the preceding night under that roof. What young girl of twenty-three would not have been, as Laurence was, proud to play the part of Destiny? and who would not have felt, as she did, a sense of compassion for those whom she felt to be so far below her in loyalty?

"She sleeps," said the abbé. "I have never seen her so wearied."

"Durieu tells me her mare is almost foundered," remarked Madame d'Hauterres. "Her gun has not been fired; the breech is clean; she has evidently not hunted."

"Oh! that's neither here nor there," said the abbé.

"Bah?" cried Mademoiselle Goujet; "when I was twenty-three and saw I should be an old maid all my life, I rushed about and fatigued myself in a dozen ways. I understand how the countess can scour the country for hours without thinking of the game. It is nearly twelve years now since she has seen her cousins, and you know she loves them. Well, if I were she, if I were as young and pretty, I'd make a straight line for



Germany! Poor darling, perhaps she is thinking of the frontier, and that may be the reason why she rides so far towards it."

"You are rather giddy, Mademoiselle Goujet," said the abbé, smiling.

"Not at all," she replied. "I see you all uneasy about the goings on of a young girl, and I am explaining them to you."

"Her cousins will submit and return soon; they will all be rich, and she will end by calming down," said old d'Hautesserre.

"God grant it!" said his wife, taking out a gold snuff-box which had again seen the light under the Consulate.

"There is something stirring in the neighborhood," remarked Monsieur d'Hautesserre to the abbé. "Malin has been two days at Gondreville."

"Malin!" cried Laurence, roused by the name, though her sleep was sound.

"Yes," replied the abbé, "but he leaves to-night; everybody is conjecturing the motive of this hasty visit."

"That man," said Laurence, "is the evil genius of our two houses."

The countess had been dreaming of her cousins and the young Hautesserres; she saw them in peril. Her beautiful eyes grew fixed and glassy as her mind

thus warned dwelt on the dangers they were about to incur in Paris. She rose suddenly and went to her bedroom without speaking. Her bedroom was the best in the house ; next it came a dressing-room and an oratory, in the tower which faced towards the forest. Soon after she had left the salon the dogs barked, the bell of the small gate rang, and Durieu rushed into the salon with a frightened face. "Here is the mayor!" he said. "Something is the matter."

## VI.

## A DOMICILIARY VISIT.

THE mayor, a former huntsman of the house of Simeuse, came occasionally to the château, where the d'Hauteserres showed him, out of policy, a deference to which he attached great value. His name was Goulard; he had married a rich woman of Troyes, whose property, which was in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, he had further increased by the purchase of a fine abbey and its lands, in which he invested all his savings. The vast abbey of Val-des-Preux, standing about a mile from the château, he had turned into a dwelling that was almost as splendid as Gondreville; in it his wife and he were now living like rats in a cathedral. "Ah! Goulard, you have been greedy," Mademoiselle had said to him with a laugh the first time she received him at Cinq-Cygne. Though greatly attached to the Revolution and coldly received by the countess, the mayor always felt himself bound by ties of respect to the Cinq-Cygne and Simeuse families. He therefore shut his eyes to what went on at the château. He called shutting his eyes not seeing the portraits of Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, and the royal children,

and those of Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, Cazalès and Charlotte Corday, which filled the various panels of the salon ; not resenting either the wishes freely expressed in his presence for the ruin of the Republic, or the ridicule flung at the five directors and all the other governmental combinations of that time. The position of this man, who, like many parvenus, having once made his fortune, reverted to his early faith in the old families, and sought to attach himself to them, was now being made use of by the two members of the Paris police whose profession had been so quickly guessed by Michu, and who, before going to Gondreville had reconnoitred the neighborhood.

These men had a secret mission. Malin was not mistaken in attributing a double purpose to those stars of tragic farces. But, before seeing them at work, it is advisable to show the head of which they were the arms. When Bonaparte became First Consul he found Fouché at the head of the police. The Revolution had frankly and with good reason made the management of the police into a special ministry. But after his return from Marengo, Bonaparte created the prefecture of police, placed Dubois in charge of it, and called Fouché to the Council of State, naming as his successor in the ministry a conventional named Cochon, since known as Comte de Lapparent. Fouché, who considered the ministry of police as by far the most important in a govern-

ment of broad ideas and fixed policy, saw disgrace or at any rate distrust in the change. After Napoleon became aware of the immense superiority of this great statesman, as evidenced in the affair of the infernal machine and in the conspiracy with which we are now concerned, he returned him to the ministry of police. Later still, becoming alarmed at the powers Fouché displayed during his absence at the time of the affair at Walcheren, the Emperor gave that ministry to the Duc de Rovigo, and sent Fouché (Duc d'Otrante) as governor to the Illyrian provinces, — an appointment which was in fact an exile.

The singular genius of this man, Fouché, which had the power of inspiring Napoleon with a sort of fear, did not reveal itself all at once. This obscure conventional, one of the most extraordinary men of our time, and the most misjudged, was moulded, as it were, by the whirlwind of events. He raised himself under the Directory to the height from which men of genius can see the future and judge the past, and then, like certain commonplace actors who suddenly become admirable through the light of some vivid perception, he gave proofs of his dexterity during the rapid revolution of the 18th Brumaire. This man with the pallid face, educated to monastic dissimulation, possessing the secrets of the *montagnards* to whom he belonged, and those of the royalists to whom he ended by belonging,

had slowly and silently studied the men, the events, and the interests on the political stage; he penetrated Napoleon's secrets, he gave him useful counsel and precious information. Satisfied with having proved his capacity and his usefulness, Fouché was careful not to disclose himself completely. He wished to remain at the head of affairs, but the Emperor's restless uneasiness about him cost him his place.

The ingratitude or rather the distrust shown by Napoleon after the affair at Walcheren, gives the key-note to the character of a man who, unfortunately for himself, was not a great *seigneur*, and whose conduct was modelled on that of Talleyrand. At that time neither his former colleagues nor his present ones had suspected the amplitude of his genius, which was purely ministerial, essentially governmental, just in its forecasts and incredibly sagacious. To-day, every impartial historian perceives that Napoleon's inordinate self-love was among the chief causes of his fall, a punishment which cruelly expiated his wrong-doing. In the mind of that distrustful sovereign lurked a constant jealousy for his own rising power, which influenced all his actions, and caused his secret hatred of men of talent, the precious legacy of the Revolution, with whom he might have made himself a cabinet capable of being a true repository for his thoughts. Talleyrand and Fouché were not the only ones who gave him umbrage. The misfortune

of usurpers is that those who have given them a crown are as much their enemies as those from whom they snatch it. Napoleon's sovereignty was never convincingly felt by those who were once his superiors or his equals, nor by those who still held to the doctrine of rights; none of them regarded their oath of allegiance to him as binding.

Malin, an inferior man, incapable of comprehending Fouché's hidden genius, or of distrusting his own perceptions, burned himself, like a moth in a candle, by asking him confidentially to send agents to Gondreville, where, he said, he hoped to obtain certain clues to the conspiracy. Fouché, without alarming his friend by any questions, asked himself why Malin was going to Gondreville, and why he did not immediately and without loss of time, give the information he already possessed. The ex-oratorian, fed from his youth up on trickery, and well aware of the double part played by a good many of the conventionals, said to himself: "From whom is Malin likely to obtain information when we ourselves know little or nothing?" Fouché concluded therefore that there was some either latent or prospective collusion, and took care to say nothing about it to the First Consul. He preferred to make Malin his instrument rather than destroy him. It was Fouché's habit to keep to himself a good part of the secrets he detected, and he thus obtained for his own

purposes a power over those concerned which was even greater than that of Bonaparte. This duplicity was one of the Emperor's charges against his minister.

Fouché knew of the swindling transaction by which Malin became possessed of Gondreville and which led him to keep his eyes anxiously on the Simeuse brothers. These gentlemen were now serving in the army of Condé; Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was their cousin; possibly they were in her neighborhood, and were sharers in the conspiracy; if so, it would implicate the house of Condé to which they were devoted. Talleyrand and Fouché were bent on casting light into this dark corner of the conspiracy of 1803. All these considerations Fouché saw at a glance, rapidly and with great clearness. But between Malin, Talleyrand, and himself there were strong ties which forced him to the utmost circumspection, and made him anxious to know the exact state of things within the walls of Gondreville. Corentin was unreservedly attached to Fouché, just as Monsieur de la Besnardière was to Talleyrand, Gentz to Monsieur de Metternich, Dundas to Pitt, Duroc to Napoleon, Chavigny to Cardinal Richelieu. Corentin was not the counsellor of his master, but his instrument, the Tristan to this Louis XI. of low estate. Fouché had kept him in the ministry of the police when he himself left it, so as to still keep an eye and a finger in it. It was said that Corentin belonged to Fouché by some unavowed relation-



ship, for he rewarded him lavishly after every service. Corentin had a friend in Peyrade, the old pupil of the last lieutenant of police ; but he kept a good many of his secrets from him. Fouché gave Corentin an order to explore the château of Gondreville, to get the plan of it into his memory, and to know every hiding-place within its walls.

“ We may be obliged to return there,” said the ex-minister, precisely as Napoleon told his lieutenants to explore the field of Austerlitz on which he intended to fall back.

Corentin was also to study Malin’s conduct, discover what influence he had in the neighborhood, and observe the men whom he employed. Fouché regarded it as certain that the Simeuse brothers were in that part of the country. By cautiously watching the two officers, who were closely allied with the Prince de Condé, Peyrade and Corentin could obtain precious light on the ramifications of the conspiracy beyond the Rhine. In any case, however, Corentin received the means, the orders, and the agents, to surround the château of Cinq-Cygne and watch the whole region, from the forest of Nodesme into Paris. Fouché insisted on the utmost caution, and would only allow a domiciliary visit to Cinq-Cygne in case Malin gave them some positive information which made it necessary. By way of instructions he explained to Corentin the otherwise inex-

plicable personality of Michu, who had been watched by the police for the last three years. Corentin's idea was that of his master: "Malin knows all about the conspiracy — But," he added to himself, "perhaps Fouché does, too; who knows?"

Corentin, having started for Troyes before Malin, had made arrangements with the commandant of the gendarmerie in that town, who picked out a number of his most intelligent men and placed them under orders of an able captain. Corentin chose Gondreville as the place of rendezvous, and directed the captain to send some of his men at night in four detachments to different points of the valley of Cinq-Cygne at sufficient distance from each other to cause no alarm. These four pickets were to form a square and close in around the château of Cinq-Cygne. By leaving Corentin alone at Gondreville during his consultation in the fields with Grévin, Malin had enabled him to fulfil part of Fouché's orders and explore the house. When the Councillor of State returned home he told Corentin so positively that the d'Hauteserre and Simeuse brothers were in the neighborhood and probably at Cinq-Cygne that the two agents despatched the captain with the rest of his company, who, fortunately for the four gentlemen, crossed the forest on their way to the château during the time when Michu was making Violette drunk. Malin had told Corentin and Peyrade of the escape he had from

*“ The gendarmes surround the Château now and are  
as good as a net.”*





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lying in wait for him. The two agents related the incident of the gun they had seen the bailiff load, and Grévin had sent Violette to obtain information as to what was going on at Michu's home. Corentin advised the notary to take Malin to his own house in the little town of Arcis, and let him sleep there as a measure of precaution. At the moment when Michu and his wife were rushing through the forest on their way to Cinq-Cygne, Peyrade and Corentin were starting from Gondreville for Cinq-Cygne in a shabby wicker carriage, drawn by one post-horse driven by the corporal of Arcis, one of the shrewdest men in the Legion, whom the commandant at Troyes advised them to employ.

"The surest way to seize them all is to warn them," said Peyrade to Corentin. "At the moment when they are well frightened and are trying to save their papers or to escape we'll fall upon them like a thunderbolt. The gendarmes surround the château now and are as good as a net. We sha'n't lose one of them!"

"You had better send the mayor to warn them," said the corporal. "He is friendly to them and would n't like to see them harmed; they won't distrust him."

Just as Goulard was preparing to go to bed, Corentin, who stopped the vehicle in a little wood, went to his house and told him, confidentially, that in a few moments an emissary from the government would require him to enter the château of Cinq-Cygne and arrest the

brothers d'Hauteserre and Simeuse ; and in case they had already disappeared he would have to ascertain if they had slept there the night before, search Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's papers, and, possibly, arrest both the masters and servants of the household.

"Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne," said Corentin, "is undoubtedly protected by some great personages, for I have received private orders to warn her of this visit, and to do all I can to save her without compromising myself. Once on the ground, I shall no longer be able to do so, for I am not alone ; go to the château yourself and warn them."

The mayor's visit at that time of night was all the more bewildering to the card-players when they saw the agitation of his face.

"Where is the countess?" were his first words.

"She has gone to bed," said Madame d'Hauteserre.

The mayor, incredulous, listened to noises that were heard on the upper floor.

"What is the matter with you, Goulard?" said Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

Goulard was dumb with surprise as he noted the tranquil ease of the faces about him. Observing the peaceful and innocent game of cards which he had thus interrupted, he was unable to imagine what the Parisian police meant by their suspicions.

At that moment Laurence, kneeling in her oratory,



was praying fervently for the success of the conspiracy. She prayed to God to send help and succor to the murderers of Bonaparte. She implored Him ardently to destroy that fatal being. The fanaticism of Harmodius, Judith, Jacques Clément, Ankarstroëm, of Charlotte Corday and Limoëlan, inspired this pure and virgin spirit. Catherine was preparing the bed, Gothard was closing the blinds, when Marie Michu coming under the windows flung a pebble on the glass and was seen at once.

“Mademoiselle, here’s some one,” said Gothard, seeing a woman.

“Hush!” said Marie, in a low voice. “Come down and speak to me.”

Gothard was in the garden in less time than a bird would have taken to fly down from a tree.

“In a minute the château will be surrounded by the gendarmerie. Saddle mademoiselle’s horse without making any noise and take it down through the breach in the moat between the stables and this tower.”

Marthe quivered when she saw Laurence, who had followed Gothard, standing beside her.

“What is it?” asked Laurence, quietly.

“The conspiracy against the First Consul is discovered,” replied Marthe, in a whisper. “My husband, who seeks to save your two cousins, sends me to ask you to come and speak to him.”

Laurence drew back and looked at Marthe. "Who are you?" she said.

"Marthe Michu."

"I do not know what you want of me," replied the countess, coldly.

"Take care, you will kill them. Come with me, I implore you in the Simeuse name," said Marthe, clasping her hands and stretching them towards Laurence. "Have you papers here which may compromise you? If so, destroy them. From the heights over there my husband has just seen the silver-laced hats and the muskets of the gendarmerie."

Gothard had already clambered to the hay-loft and seen the same sight; he heard in the stillness of the evening the sound of their horses' hoofs. Down he slipped into the stable and saddled his mistress's mare, whose feet Catherine, at a word from the lad, muffled in linen.

"Where am I to go?" said Laurence to Marthe, whose look and language bore the unmistakeable signs of sincerity.

"Through the breach," she replied; "my noble husband is there. You shall learn the value of a 'Judas'!"

Catherine went quickly into the salon, picked up the hat, veil, whip, and gloves of her mistress, and disappeared. This sudden apparition and action were so

striking a commentary on the mayor's inquiry that Madame d'Hauteserre and the abbé exchanged glances which contained the melancholy thought: "Farewell to all our peace! Laurence is conspiring; she will be the death of her cousins."

"But what do you really mean?" said Monsieur d'Hauteserre to the mayor.

"The château is surrounded. You are about to receive a domiciliary visit. If your sons are here tell them to escape, and the Simeuse brothers too, if they are with them."

"My sons!" exclaimed Madame d'Hauteserre, stupefied.

"We have seen no one," said Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"So much the better," said Goulard; "but I care too much for the Cinq-Cygne and Simeuse families to let any harm come to them. Listen to me. If you have any compromising papers —"

"Papers!" repeated the old gentleman.

"Yes, if you have any, burn them at once," said the mayor. "I'll go and amuse the police agents."

Goulard, whose object was to run with the royalist hare and hold with the republican hounds, left the room; at that moment the dogs barked violently.

"There is no longer time," said the abbé, "here they come! But who is to warn the countess? Where is she?"

"Catherine did n't come for her hat and whip to make relics of them," remarked Mademoiselle Goujet.

Goulard tried to detain the two agents for a few moments, assuring them of the perfect ignorance of the family at Cinq-Cygne.

"You don't know these people!" said Peyrade, laughing at him.

The two agents, insinuatingly dangerous, entered the house at once, followed by the corporal from Arcis and one gendarme. The sight of them paralyzed the peaceful card-players, who kept their seats at the table, terrified by such a display of force. The noise produced by a dozen gendarmes whose horses were stamping on the terrace, was heard without.

"I do not see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne," said Corentin.

"She is probably asleep in her bedroom," said Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"Come with me, ladies," said Corentin, turning to pass through the ante-chamber and up the staircase, followed by Mademoiselle Goujet and Madame d'Hauteserre. "Rely upon me," he whispered to the old lady. "I am in your interests. I sent the mayor to warn you. Distrust my colleague and look to me. I can save every one of you."

"But what is it all about?" said Mademoiselle Goujet.

“ A matter of life and death ; you must know that,” replied Corentin.

Madame d’Hauteserre fainted. To Mademoiselle Goujet’s great astonishment and Corentin’s disappointment, Laurence’s room was empty. Certain that no one could have escaped from the park or the château, for all the issues were guarded, Corentin stationed a gendarme in every room and ordered others to search the farm buildings, stables, and sheds. Then he returned to the salon, where Durieu and his wife and the other servants had rushed in the wildest excitement. Peyrade was studying their faces with his little blue eye, cold and calm in the midst of the uproar. Just as Corentin reappeared alone (Mademoiselle Goujet remaining behind to take care of Madame d’Hauteserre) the tramp of horses was heard, and presently the sound of a child’s weeping. The horses entered by the small gate ; and the general suspense was put an end to by a corporal appearing at the door of the salon pushing Gothard, whose hands were tied, and Catherine whom he led to the agents.

“ Here are some prisoners,” he said ; “ that little scamp was escaping on horseback.”

“ Fool ! ” said Corentin, in his ear, “ why did n’t you let him alone ? You could have found out something by following him.”

Gothard had chosen to burst into tears and behave

like an idiot. Catherine took an attitude of artless innocence which made the old agent reflective. The pupil of Lenoir, after considering the two prisoners carefully, and noting the vacant air of the old gentleman whom he took to be sly, the intelligent eye of the abbé who was still fingering the cards, and the utter stupefaction of the servants and Durieu, approached Corentin and whispered in his ear, "We are not dealing with ninnies."

Corentin answered with a look at the card-table; then he added. "They were playing at boston! Mademoiselle's bed was just being made for the night; she escaped in a hurry; it is a regular surprise; we shall catch them."

## VII.

## A FOREST NOOK.

A BREACH has always a cause and a purpose. Here is the explanation of how the one which led from the tower called that of Mademoiselle and the stables came to be made. After his installation as Laurence's guardian at Cinq-Cygne old d'Hauteserre converted a long ravine, through which the water of the forest flowed into the moat, into a roadway between two tracts of uncultivated land belonging to the château, by merely setting out in it about a hundred walnut-trees which he found ready in the nursery. In eleven years these trees had grown and branched so as to nearly cover the road, hidden already by steep banks, which ran into a little wood of thirty acres recently purchased. When the château had its full complement of inhabitants they all preferred to take this covered way through the breach to the main road which skirted the park walls and led to the farm, rather than go round by the entrance. By dint of thus using it the breach on the sides of the moat had gradually been widened on both sides, with all the less scruple because in this nineteenth cen-

ture of ours moats are no longer of the slightest use, and Laurence's guardian had often talked of putting this one to some other purpose. The constant crumbling away of the earth and stones and gravel had ended by filling up the ditch, so that only after heavy rains was the causeway thus constructed covered. But the bank was still so steep that it was difficult to make a horse descend it, and even more difficult to get him up upon the main road. Horses, however, seem in times of peril to share their masters' thought.

While the young countess was hesitating to follow Marthe, and asking explanations, Michu, from his vantage-ground watched the closing in of the gendarmes and understood their plan. He grew desperate as time went by and the countess did not come to him. A squad of gendarmes were marching along the park wall and stationing themselves as sentinels, each man being near enough to communicate with those on either side of him, by voice and eye. Michu, lying flat on his stomach, his ear to earth, gauged, like a red Indian, by the strength of the sounds the time that remained to him.

"I came too late!" he said to himself. "Violette shall pay dear for this! what a time it took to make him drunk! What can be done?"

He heard the detachment which was coming through the forest reach the iron gates and turn into the main



road, where before long it would meet the squad coming up from the other direction.

“Still five or six minutes!” he said.

At that instant the countess appeared. Michu took her with a firm hand and pushed her into the covered way.

“Keep straight before you! Lead her to where my horse is,” he said to his wife, “and remember that gendarmes have ears.”

Seeing Catherine, who carried the hat and whip, and Gothard leading the mare, the man, keen-witted in presence of danger, bethought himself of playing the gendarmes a trick as useful as the one he had just played Violette. Gothard had forced the mare to mount the bank.

“Her feet muffled! I thank thee, boy,” exclaimed the bailiff.

Michu let the mare follow her mistress and took the hat, gloves, and whip from Catherine.

“You have sense, boy, you’ll understand me,” he said. “Force your own horse up here, jump on him, and draw the gendarmes after you across the fields towards the farm; get the whole squad to follow you—And you,” he added to Catherine, “there are other gendarmes coming up on the road from Cinq-Cygne to Gondreville; run in the opposite direction to the one Gothard takes, and draw them towards the forest.

Manage so that we shall not be interfered with in the covered way."

Catherine and the boy, who were destined to give in this affair such remarkable proofs of intelligence, executed the manœuvre in a way to make both detachments of gendarmes believe that they held the game. The dim light of the moon prevented the pursuers from distinguishing the figure, clothing, sex, or number of those they followed. The pursuit was based on the maxim, "Always arrest those who are escaping," — the folly of which saying was, as we have seen, energetically declared by Corentin to the corporal in command. Michu, counting on this instinct of the gendarmes, was able to reach the forest a few moments after the countess, whom Marthe had guided to the appointed place.

"Go home now," he said to Marthe. "The forest is watched and it is dangerous to remain here. We need all our freedom."

Michu unfastened his horse and asked the countess to follow him.

"I shall not go a step further," said Laurence, "unless you give me some proof of the interest you seem to have in us — for, after all, you are Michu."

"Mademoiselle," he answered, in a gentle voice; "the part I am playing can be explained to you in two words. I am, unknown to the Marquis de Simeuse and his brother, the guardian of their property. On this

subject I received the last instructions of their late father and their dear mother, my protectress. I have played the part of a virulent Jacobin to serve my dear young masters. Unhappily, I began this course too late; I could not save their parents." Here, Michu's voice broke down. "Since the young men emigrated I have sent them regularly the sums they needed to live upon."

"Through the house of Breintmayer of Strasburg?" asked the countess.

"Yes, mademoiselle; the correspondents of Monsieur Girel of Troyes, a royalist who, like me, made himself for good reasons, a Jacobin. The paper which your farmer picked up one evening and which I forced him to surrender, related to the affair and would have compromised your cousins. My life no longer belongs to me, but to them, you understand. I could not buy in Gondreville. In my position, I should have lost my head had the authorities known I had the money. I preferred to wait and buy it later. But that scoundrel of a Marion was the slave of another scoundrel, Malin. All the same, Gondreville shall once more belong to its rightful masters. That's my affair. Four hours ago I had Malin sighted by my gun; ha! he was almost gone then! Were he dead, the property would be sold and you could have bought it. In case of my death my wife would have brought you a letter which would have

given you the means of buying it. But I overheard that villain telling his accomplice Grévin — another scoundrel like himself — that the Marquis and his brother were conspiring against the First Consul, that they were here in the neighborhood, and that he meant to give them up and get rid of them so as to keep Gondreville in peace. I myself saw the police spies ; I laid aside my gun, and I have lost no time in coming here, thinking that you must be the one to know best how to warn the young men. That's the whole of it."

"You are worthy to be a noble," said Laurence, offering her hand to Michu, who tried to kneel and kiss it. She saw his motion and prevented it, saying: "Stand up!" in a tone of voice and with a look which made him amends for all the scorn of the last twelve years.

"You reward me as though I had done all that remains for me to do," he said. "But don't you hear them, those huzzars of the guillotine? Let us go elsewhere."

He took the mare's bridle and led her a little distance.

"Think only of sitting firm," he said, "and of saving your head from the branches of the trees which might strike you in the face."

Then he mounted his own horse and guided the young girl for half an hour at full gallop ; making turns and half turns, and striking into wood-paths, so as to con-

fuse their traces, until they reached a spot where he pulled up.

"I don't know where I am," said the countess looking about her, — "I, who know the forest as well as you do."

"We are in the heart of it," he replied. "Two gendarmes are after us, but we are quite safe."

The picturesque spot to which the bailiff had guided Laurence was destined to be so fatal to the principal personages of this drama, and to Michu himself, that it becomes our duty, as an historian, to describe it. The scene became, as we shall see hereafter, one of noted interest in the judiciary annals of the Empire.

The forest of Nodesme belonged to the monastery of Notre-Dame. That monastery, seized, sacked, and demolished, had disappeared entirely, monks and property. The forest, an object of much cupidity, was taken into the domain of the Comtes de Champagne, who mortgaged it later and allowed it to be sold. In the course of six centuries nature covered its ruins with her rich and vigorous green mantle, and effaced them so thoroughly that the existence of one of the finest convents was no longer even indicated except by a slight eminence shaded by noble trees and circled by thick, impenetrable shrubbery, which, since 1794, Michu had taken great pains to make still more impenetrable by planting the thorny acacia in all the slight openings

between the bushes. A pond was at the foot of the eminence and showed the existence of a hidden stream which no doubt determined in former days the site of the monastery. The late owner of the title to the forest of Nodesme was the first to recognize the etymology of the name, which dated back for eight centuries, and to discover that at one time a monastery had existed in the heart of the forest. When the first rumblings of the thunder of the Revolution were heard, the Marquis de Simeuse, who had been forced to look into his title by a lawsuit and so learned the above facts as it were by chance, began, with a secret intention not difficult to conceive, to search for some remains of the former monastery. The keeper, Michu, to whom the forest was well known, helped his master in the search, and it was his sagacity as a forester which led to the discovery of the site. Observing the trend of the five chief roads of the forest, some of which were now effaced, he saw that they all ended either at the little eminence or by the pond at the foot of it, to which points travellers from Troyes, from the valley of Arcis and that of Cinq-Cygne, and from Bar-sur-Aube doubtless came. The marquis wished to excavate the hillock, but he dared not employ the people of the neighborhood. Pressed by circumstances, he abandoned the intention, leaving in Michu's mind a strong conviction that the eminence had either the treasure or the founda-

tions of the former abbey. He continued, all alone, this archæological enterprise; he sounded the earth and discovered a hollowness on the level of the pond between two trees, at the foot of the only craggy part of the hillock.

One fine night he came to the place armed with a pickaxe, and by the sweat of his brow uncovered a succession of cellars, which were entered by a flight of stone steps. The pond, which was three feet deep in the middle, formed a sort of dipper, the handle of which seemed to come from the little eminence, and went far to prove that a spring had once issued from the crags, and was now lost by infiltration through the forest. The marshy shores of the pond, covered with aquatic trees, alders, willow, and ash, were the terminus of all the wood-paths, the remains of former roads and forest by-ways, now abandoned. The water, flowing from a spring, though apparently stagnant, was covered with large-leaved plants and cresses, which gave it a perfectly green surface almost indistinguishable from the shores, which were covered with fine close herbage. The place is too far from human habitations for any animal, unless a wild one, to come there. Convinced that no game was in the marsh and repelled by the craggy sides of the hills, keepers and hunters had never explored or visited this nook, which belonged to a part of the forest where the timber had not been cut for

many years and which Michu meant to keep in its full growth when the time came round to fell it.

At the further end of the first cellar was a vaulted chamber, clean and dry, built with hewn stone, a sort of convent dungeon, such as they called in monastic days the *in pace*. The salubrity of the chamber and the preservation of this part of the staircase and of the vaults were explained by the presence of the spring, which had been inclosed at some time by a wall of extraordinary thickness built in brick and cement like those of the Romans, and received all the waters. Michu closed the entrance to this retreat with large stones; then, to keep the secret of it to himself and make it impenetrable to others, he made a rule never to enter it except from the wooded height above, by clambering down the crag instead of approaching it by the pond.

Just as the fugitives arrived, the moon was casting her beautiful silvery light on the aged tree-tops above the crag, and flickering on the splendid foliage at the corners of the several paths, all of which ended here, some with one tree, some with a group of trees. On all sides the eye was irresistibly led along their vanishing perspectives, following the curve of a wood-path or the solemn stretch of a forest glade flanked by a wall of verdure that was nearly black. The moonlight, filtering through the branches of the crossways, made the



lonely, tranquil waters, where they peeped between the cresses and the lily-pads, sparkle like diamonds. The croaking of the frogs broke the deep silence of this beautiful forest-nook, the wild odors of which incited the soul to thoughts of liberty.

“Are we safe?” said the countess to Michu.

“Yes, mademoiselle. But we have each some work to do. Do you go and fasten our horses to the trees at the top of the little hill; tie a handkerchief round the mouth of each of them,” he said, giving her his cravat; “your beast and mine are both intelligent, they will understand they are not to neigh. When you have done that, come down the crag directly above the pond; but don’t let your habit catch anywhere. You will find me below.”

While the countess hid the horses and tied and gagged them, Michu removed the stones and opened the entrance to the caverns. The countess, who thought she knew the forest by heart, was amazed when she descended into the vaulted chambers. Michu replaced the stones above them with the dexterity of a mason. As he finished, the sound of horses’ feet and the voices of the gendarmes echoed in the darkness; but he quietly struck a match, lighted a resinous bit of wood and led the countess to the *in pace*, where there was still a piece of the candle with which he had first explored the caves. An iron door of some thickness, eaten in several places

by rust, had been put in good order by the bailiff, and could be fastened securely by bars slipping into holes in the wall on either side of it. The countess, half dead with fatigue, sat down on a stone bench, above which there still remained an iron ring, the staple of which was imbedded in the masonry.

"We have a salon to converse in," said Michu. "The gendarmes may prowl as much as they like; the worst they could do would be to take our horses."

"If they do that," said Laurence, "it would be the death of my cousins and the Messieurs d'Hauteserre. Tell me now, what do you know?"

Michu related what he had overheard Malin say to Grévin.

"They are already on the road to Paris; they were to enter it to-morrow morning," said the countess when he had finished.

"Lost!" exclaimed Michu. "All persons entering or leaving the barriers are examined. Malin has strong reasons to let my masters compromise themselves; he is seeking to get them killed out of his way."

"And I, who don't know anything of the general plan of the affair," cried Laurence, "how can I warn Georges, Rivière and Moreau? Where are they?—However, let us think only of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres; you must catch up with them, no matter what it costs."

“The telegraph goes faster than the best horse,” said Michu; “and of all the nobles concerned in this conspiracy your cousins are the closest watched. If I can find them, they must be hidden here and kept here till the affair is over. Their poor father may have had a foreboding when he set me to search for this hiding-place; perhaps he felt that his sons would be saved here.”

“My mare is from the stables of the Comte d’Artois, — she is the daughter of his finest English horse,” said Laurence; “but she has already gone sixty miles, she would drop dead before you reached them.”

“Mine is in good condition,” replied Michu; “and if you did sixty miles I shall have only thirty to do.”

“Nearer forty,” she said, “they have been walking since dark. You will overtake them beyond Lagny, at Coupvrai, where they expected to be at daybreak. They are disguised as sailors, and will enter Paris by the river on some vessel. This,” she added, taking half of her mother’s wedding-ring from her finger, “is the only thing which will make them trust you; they have the other half. The keeper of Coupvrai is the father of one of their soldiers; he has hidden them to-night in a hut in the forest deserted by charcoal-burners. They are eight in all, Messieurs d’Hauteserre and four others are with my cousins.”

“Mademoiselle, no one is looking for the others! let them save themselves as they can; we must think only of the Messieurs de Simeuse. It is enough just to warn the rest.”

“What! abandon the d’Hauteserres? never!” she said. “They must all perish or be saved together!”

“Only petty noblemen!” remarked Michu.

“They are only chevaliers, I know that,” she replied, “but they are related to the Cinq-Cygne and Simeuse blood. Save them all, and advise with them how best to regain this forest.”

“The gendarmes are here, — don’t you hear them? they are holding a council of war.”

“Well, you have twice had luck to-night; go! bring my cousins here and hide them in these vaults; they’ll be safe from all pursuit — Alas! I am good for nothing!” she cried, with rage; “I should be only a beacon to light the enemy — but the police will never imagine that my cousins are in the forest if they see me at my ease. So the question resolves itself into this: how can we get five good horses to bring them in six hours from Lagny to the forest, — five horses to be killed and hidden in some thicket.”

“And the money?” said Michu, who was thinking deeply as he listened to the young countess.

“I gave my cousins a hundred louis this evening,” she replied.

“I’ll answer for them!” cried Michu. “But once hidden here you must not attempt to see them. My wife, or the little one, shall bring them food twice a week. But, as I can’t be sure of what may happen to me, remember, mademoiselle, in case of trouble, that the main beam in my hay-loft has been bored with an auger. In the hole, which is plugged with a bit of wood, you will find a plan showing how to reach this spot. The trees which you will find marked with a red dot on the plan have a black mark at their foot close to the earth. Each of these trees is a sign-post. At the foot of the third old oak which stands to the left of each sign-post, two feet in front of it and buried seven feet in the ground, you will find a large metal tube; in each tube are one hundred thousand francs in gold. These eleven trees — there are only eleven — contain the whole fortune of the Simeuse brothers, now that Gondreville has been taken from them.”

“It will take a hundred years for the nobility to recover from such blows,” said Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, slowly.

“Is there a pass-word?” asked Michu.

“‘France and Charles’ for the soldiers, ‘Laurence and Louis’ for the Messieurs d’Hauteserre and Simeuse. Good God! to think that I saw them yesterday for the first time in eleven years, and that now they are in dan-

ger of death — and what a death! Michu," she said, with a melancholy look, "be as prudent during the next fifteen hours as you have been grand and devoted during the last twelve years. If disaster were to overtake my cousins now I should die of it — No," she added, quickly, "I would live long enough to kill Bonaparte."

"There will be two of us to do that when all is lost," said Michu.

Laurence took his rough hand and wrung it warmly, as the English do. Michu looked at his watch; it was midnight.

"We must leave here at any cost," he said. "Death to the gendarme who attempts to stop me! And you, madame la comtesse, without presuming to dictate, ride back to Cinq-Cygne as fast as you can. The police are there by this time; fool them! delay them!"

The hole once opened, Michu flung himself down with his ear to the earth; then he rose precipitately. "The gendarmes are at the edge of the forest towards Troyes!" he said. "Ha, I'll get the better of them yet!"

He helped the countess to come out, and replaced the stones. When this was done he heard her soft voice telling him she must see him mounted before mounting herself. Tears came to the eyes of the stern man as he

exchanged a last look with his young mistress, whose own eyes were tearless.

“Fool them! yes, he is right!” she said when she heard him no longer. Then she darted towards Cinq-Cygne at full gallop.

## VIII.

## TRIALS OF THE POLICE.

MADAME D'HAUTESERRE, roused by the danger of her sons, and not believing that the Revolution was over, but still fearing its summary justice, recovered her senses by the violence of the same distress which made her lose them. Led by an agonizing curiosity she returned to the salon, which presented a picture worthy of the brush of a genre painter. The abbé, still seated at the card-table and mechanically playing with the counters, was covertly observing Corentin and Peyrade, who were standing together at a corner of the fireplace and speaking in a low voice. Several times Corentin's keen eye met the not less keen glance of the priest ; but, like two adversaries who knew themselves equally strong, and who return to their guard after crossing their weapons, each averted his eyes the instant they met. The worthy old d'Hauteserre, poised on his long thin legs like a heron, was standing beside the stout form of the mayor, in an attitude expressive of utter stupefaction. The mayor, though dressed as a bourgeois, always looked like a servant. Each gazed with a bewildered eye at the gendarmes, in whose clutches Gothard was



still sobbing, his hands purple and swollen from the tightness of the cord that bound them. Catherine maintained her attitude of artless simplicity, which was quite impenetrable. The corporal, who, according to Corentin, had committed a great blunder in arresting these smaller fry, did not know whether to stay where he was or to depart. He stood pensively in the middle of the salon, his hand on the hilt of his sabre, his eye on the two Parisians. The Duricus, also stupefied, and the other servants of the château made an admirable group of expressive uneasiness. If it had not been for Gothard's convulsive sniffings those present could have heard the flies fly.

When Madame d'Hauteserre, pale and terrified, opened the door and entered the room, almost carried by Mademoiselle Goujet, whose red eyes had evidently been weeping, all faces turned to her at once. The two agents hoped as much as the household feared to see Laurence enter. This spontaneous movement of both masters and servants seemed produced by the sort of mechanism which makes a number of wooden figures perform the same gesture or wink the same eye.

Madame d'Hauteserre advanced by three rapid strides towards Corentin and said, in a broken voice but violently: "For pity's sake, monsieur, tell me what my sons are accused of. Do you really think they have been here?"

The abbé, who seemed to be saying to himself when he saw the old lady, "She will certainly commit some folly," lowered his eyes.

"My duty and the mission I am engaged in forbid me to tell you," answered Corentin, with a gracious but rather mocking air.

This refusal, which the detestable politeness of the vulgar fop seemed to make all the more emphatic, petrified the poor mother, who fell into a chair beside the Abbé Goujet, clasped her hands and began to pray.

"Where did you arrest that blubber?" asked Corentin, addressing the corporal and pointing to Laurence's little henchman.

"On the road that leads to the farm along the park walls; the little scamp had nearly reached the Closeaux woods," replied the corporal.

"And that girl?"

"She? oh, it was Oliver who caught her."

"Where was she going?"

"Towards Gondreville."

"They were going in opposite directions?" said Corentin.

"Yes," replied the gendarme.

"Is that boy the groom, and the girl the maid of the citizeness Cinq-Cygne?" said Corentin to the mayor.

"Yes," replied Goulard.

After Corentin had exchanged a few words with

Peyrade in a whisper, the latter left the room, taking the corporal of gendarmes with him. \*

Just then the corporal of Arcis made his appearance. He went up to Corentin and spoke to him in a low voice: "I know these premises well," he said; "I have searched everywhere; unless those young fellows are buried, they are not here. We have sounded all the floors and walls with the butt end of our muskets."

Peyrade, who presently returned, signed to Corentin to come out, and then took him to the breach in the moat and showed him the sunken way.

"We have guessed the trick," said Peyrade.

"And I'll tell you how it was done," added Corentin. "That little scamp and the girl decoyed those idiots of gendarmes and thus made time for the game to escape."

"We can't know the truth till daylight," said Peyrade. "The road is damp; I have ordered two gendarmes to barricade it top and bottom. We'll examine it after daylight, and find out by the footsteps who went that way."

"I see a hoof-mark," said Corentin; "let us go to the stables."

"How many horses do you keep?" said Peyrade, returning to the salon with Corentin, and addressing Monsieur d'Hauteserre and Goulard.

"Come, monsieur le maire, you know, answer," cried Corentin, seeing that that functionary hesitated.

“Why, there’s the countess’s mare, Gothard’s horse, and Monsieur d’Hauteserre’s.”

“There is only one in the stable,” said Peyrade.

“Mademoiselle is out riding,” said Duricu.

“Does she often ride about at this time of night?” said the libertine Peyrade, addressing Monsieur d’Hauteserre.

“Often,” said the good man, simply. “Monsieur le maire can tell you that.”

“Everybody knows she has her freaks,” remarked Catherine; “she looked at the sky before she went to bed, and I think the glitter of your bayonets in the moonlight puzzled her. She told me she wanted to know if there was going to be another revolution.”

“When did she go?” asked Peyrade.

“When she saw your guns.”

“Which road did she take?”

“I don’t know.”

“There’s another horse missing,” said Corentin.

“The gendarmes — took it — away-from me,” said Gothard.

“Where were you going?” said one of them.

“I was — following — my mistress to the farm,” sobbed the boy.

The gendarme looked towards Corentin as if expecting an order. But Gothard’s speech was evidently so true and yet so false, so perfectly innocent and so

artful that the two Parisians again looked at each other as if to echo Peyrade's former words: "They are not ninnies."

Monsieur d'Hauteserre seemed incapable of a word; the mayor was bewildered; the mother, imbecile from maternal fears, was putting questions to the police agents that were idiotically innocent; the servants had been roused from their sleep. Judging by these trifling signs, and these diverse characters, Corentin came to the conclusion that his only real adversary was Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Shrewd and dexterous as the police may be, they are always under certain disadvantages. Not only are they forced to discover all that is known to a conspirator, but they must also suppose and test a great number of things before they hit upon the right one. The conspirator is always thinking of his own safety, whereas the police is only on duty at certain hours. Were it not for treachery and betrayals, nothing would be easier than to conspire successfully. The conspirator has more mind concentrated upon himself than the police can bring to bear with all its vast facilities of action. Finding themselves stopped short morally, as they might be physically by a door which they expected to find open being shut in their faces, Corentin and Peyrade saw they were tricked and misled, without knowing by whom.

"I assert," said the corporal of Arcis, in their ear,

“that if the four young men slept here last night it must have been in the beds of the father and mother, and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, or those of the servants; or they must have spent the night in the park. There is not a trace of their presence.”

“Who could have warned them?” said Corentin, to Peyrade. “No one but the First Consul, Fouché, the ministers, the prefect of police, and Malin knew anything about it.”

“We must set spies in the neighborhood,” whispered Peyrade.

“And watch the spies,” said the abbé, who smiled as he overheard the word and guessed all.

“Good God!” thought Corentin, replying to the abbé’s smile with one of his own; “there is but one intelligent being here,—he’s the one to come to an understanding with; I’ll try him.”

“Gentlemen—” said the mayor, anxious to give some proof of devotion to the First Consul and addressing the two agents.

“Say ‘citizens;’ the Republic still exists,” interrupted Corentin, looking at the priest with a quizzical air.

“Citizens,” resumed the mayor, “just as I entered this salon and before I had opened my mouth Catherine rushed in and took her mistress’s hat, gloves, and whip.”

A low murmur of horror came from the breasts of all

the household except Gothard. All eyes but those of the agents and the gendarmes were turned threateningly on Goulard, the informer, seeming to dart flames at him."

"Very good, citizen mayor," said Peyrade. "We see it all plainly. Some one" (this with a glance of evident distrust at Corentin) "warned the citizeness Cinq-Cygne in time."

"Corporal, handcuff that boy," said Corentin, to the gendarme, "and take him away by himself. And shut up that girl, too," pointing to Catherine. "As for you, Peyrade, search for papers," adding in his ear, "Ransack everything, spare nothing. — Monsieur l'abbé," he said, confidentially, "I have an important communication to make to you;" and he took him into the garden.

"Listen to me attentively, monsieur," he went on; "you seem to have the mind of a bishop, and (no one can hear us) you will understand me. I have no longer any hope except through you of saving these families, who, with the greatest folly, are letting themselves roll down a precipice where no one can save them. The Messieurs Simeuse and d'Hauteserre have been betrayed by one of those infamous spies whom governments introduce into all conspiracies to learn their objects, means, and members. Don't confound me, I beg of you, with the wretch who is with me. He belongs to the police; but I am honorably attached to the Consular

cabinet, I am therefore behind the scenes. The ruin of the Simeuse brothers is not desired. Though Malin would like to see them shot, the First Consul, if they are here and have come without evil intentions, wishes them to be warned out of danger, for he likes good soldiers. The agent who accompanies me has all the powers, I, apparently, am nothing. But I see plainly what is hatching. The agent is pledged to Malin, who has doubtless promised him his influence, an office, and perhaps money if he finds the Simeuse brothers and delivers them up. The First Consul, who is a really great man, never favors selfish schemes — I don't want to know if those young men are here," he added, quickly, observing the abbé's gesture, "but I wish to tell you that there is only one way to save them. You know the law of the 6th Floréal, year X., which amnestied all the *émigrés* who were still in foreign countries on condition that they returned before the 1st Vendémiaire of the year XI., that is to say, in September of last year. But the Messieurs Simeuse having, like the Messieurs d'Hauteserre, served in the army of Condé, they come into the category of exceptions to this law. Their presence in France is therefore criminal, and suffices, under the circumstances in which we are, to make them suspected of collusion in a horrible plot. The First Consul saw the error of this exception which has made enemies for his government, and he wishes the



Messieurs Simeuse to know that no steps will be taken against them, if they will send him a petition saying that they have re-entered France intending to submit to the laws, and agreeing to take oath to the Constitution. You can understand that the document ought to be in my hands before they are arrested, and be dated some days earlier. I would then be the bearer of it — I do not ask you where those young men are,” he said again, seeing another gesture of denial from the priest. “We are, unfortunately, sure of finding them; the forest is guarded, the entrances to Paris and the frontiers are all watched. Pray listen to me; if these gentlemen are between the forest and Paris they must be taken; if they are in Paris they will be found; if they retreat to the frontier they will still be arrested. The First Consul likes the *ci-devants*, and cannot endure the republicans — simple enough; if he wants a throne he must needs strangle Liberty. Keep the matter a secret between us. This is what I will do; I will stay here till to-morrow and *be blind*; but beware of the agent; that cursed Provençal is the devil’s own valet; he has the ear of Fouché just as I have that of the First Consul.”

“If the Messieurs Simeuse are here,” said the abbé, “I would give ten pints of my blood and my right arm to save them; but if Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is in the secret she has not — and this I swear on my eternal salvation — betrayed it in any way, neither has she

done me the honor to consult me. I am now very glad of her discretion, if discretion there be. We played cards last night as usual, at boston, in almost absolute silence, until half-past ten o'clock, and we neither saw nor heard anything. Not a child can pass through this solitary valley without the whole community knowing it, and for the last two weeks no one has come from other places. Now the d'Hauteserre and the Simeuse brothers would make a party of four. Old d'Hauteserre and his wife have submitted to the present government, and they have made all imaginable efforts to persuade their sons to return to France; they wrote to them again yesterday. I can only say, upon my soul and conscience, that your visit has alone shaken my firm belief that these young men are living in Germany. Between ourselves, there is no one here, except the young countess, who does not do justice to the eminent qualities of the First Consul."

"Fox!" thought Corentin. "Well, if those young men are shot," he said, aloud; "it is because their friends have willed it—I wash my hands of the affair."

He had led the abbé to a part of the garden which lay in the moonlight, and as he said the last words he looked at him suddenly. The priest was greatly distressed, but his manner was that of a man surprised and wholly ignorant.

"Understand this, monsieur l'abbé," resumed Coren-

tin; "the right of these young men to the estate of Gondreville will render them doubly criminal in the eyes of the middle class. I'd like to see them put faith in God and not in his saints —"

"Is there really a plot?" asked the abbé, simply.

"Base, odious, cowardly, and so contrary to the generous spirit of the nation," replied Corentin, "that it will meet with universal opprobrium."

"Well! Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is incapable of baseness," cried the abbé.

"Monsieur l'abbé," replied Corentin, "let me tell you this; there is for us (meaning you and me) proof positive of her guilt; but there is not enough for the law. You see she took flight when we came; I sent the mayor to warn her."

"Yes, but for one who is so anxious to save them, you followed rather closely on his heels," said the abbé.

At those words the two men looked at each other, and all was said. Each belonged to those profound anatomists of thought to whom a mere inflexion of the voice, a look, a word suffices to reveal a soul, just as the Indians track their enemies by signs invisible to European eyes.

"I expected to draw something out of him, and I have only betrayed myself," thought Corentin.

"Ha! the sly rogue!" thought the priest,

Midnight rang from the old church clock just as Corentin and the abbé re-entered the salon. The opening and shutting of doors and closets could be heard from the bedrooms above. The gendarmes pulled open the beds; Peyrade, with the quick perception of a spy, handled and sounded everything. Such desecration excited both fear and indignation among the faithful servants of the house, who still stood motionless about the salon. Monsieur d'Hauteserre exchanged looks of commiseration with his wife and Mademoiselle Goujet. A species of horrible curiosity kept every one on the *qui vive*. Peyrade at length came down, holding in his hand a sandal-wood box which had probably been brought from China by Admiral de Simeuse. This pretty casket was flat and about the size of a quarto volume.

Peyrade made a sign to Corentin and took him into the embrasure of a window.

"I've an idea!" he said, "that Michu, who was ready to pay Marion eight hundred thousand francs in gold for Gondreville, and who evidently meant to shoot Malin yesterday, is the man who is helping the Simeuse brothers. His motive in threatening Marion and aiming at Malin must be the same. I thought when I saw him that he was capable of ideas; evidently he has but one; he discovered what was going on and he must have come here to warn them."

“Probably Malin talked about the conspiracy to his friend the notary, and Michu from his ambush overheard what was said,” remarked Corentin, continuing the inductions of his colleague. “No doubt he has only postponed his shot to prevent an evil he thinks worse than the loss of Gondreville.”

“He knew what we were the moment he laid eyes on us,” said Peyrade. “I thought then that he was amazingly intelligent for a peasant.”

“That proves that he is always on his guard,” replied Corentin. “But, mind you, my old man, don’t let us make a mistake. Treachery stinks in the nostrils, and primitive folks do scent it from afar.”

“But that’s our strength,” said the Provençal.

“Call the corporal of Arcis,” cried Corentin to one of the gendarmes. “I shall send him at once to Michu’s house,” he added to Peyrade.

“Our ear, Violette, is there,” said Peyrade.

“We started without getting news from him. Two of us are not enough; we ought to have had Sabatier with us— Corporal,” he said, when the gendarme appeared, taking him aside with Peyrade, “don’t let them fool you as they did the Troyes corporal just now. We think Michu is in this business. Go to his house, put your eye on everything, and bring word of the result.”

“One of my men heard horses in the forest just as

they arrested the little groom; I've four fine fellows now on the track of whoever is hiding there," replied the gendarme.

He left the room, and the gallop of his horse which echoed on the paved courtyard died rapidly away.

"One thing is certain," said Corentin to himself, "either they have gone to Paris or they are retreating to Germany."

He sat down, pulled a note-book from the pocket of his spencer, wrote two orders in pencil, sealed them, and made a sign to one of the gendarmes to come to him.

"Be off at full gallop to Troyes, wake up the prefect, and tell him to start the telegraph as soon as there's light enough."

The gendarme departed. The meaning of this movement and Corentin's intentions were so evident that the hearts of the household sank within them; but this new anxiety was additional to another that was now martyrizing them; their eyes were fixed on the sandal-wood box! All the while the two agents were talking together they were each taking note of those eager looks. A sort of cold anger stirred the unfeeling hearts of these men who relished the power of inspiring terror. The police man has the instincts and emotions of a hunter: but where the one employs his powers of mind and body in killing a hare, a partridge, or a deer, the

other is thinking of saving the State, or a king, and of winning a large reward. So the hunt for men is superior to the other class of hunting by all the distance that there is between animals and human beings. Moreover, a spy is forced to lift the part he plays to the level and the importance of the interests to which he is bound. Without looking further into this calling, it is easy to see that the man who follows it puts as much passionate ardor into his chase as another man does into the pursuit of game. Therefore the further these men advanced in their investigations the more eager they became; but the expression of their faces and their eyes continued calm and cold, just as their ideas, their suspicions, and their plans remained impenetrable. To any one who watched the effects of the moral scent, if we may so call it, of these bloodhounds on the track of hidden facts, and who noted and understood the movements of canine agility which led them to strike the truth in their rapid examination of probabilities, there was in it all something actually horrifying. How and why should men of genius fall so low when it was in their power to be so high? What imperfection, what vice, what passion debases them? Does a man become a police-agent as he becomes a thinker, writer, statesman, painter, general, on the condition of knowing nothing but how to spy, as the others speak, write, govern, paint, and fight? The inhabitants of the château

had but one wish, — that the thunderbolts of heaven might fall upon these miscreants; they were athirst for vengeance; and had it not been for the presence, up to this time, of the gendarmes there would undoubtedly have been an outbreak.

“No one, I suppose, has the key of this box?” said the cynical Peyrade, questioning the family as much by the movement of his huge red nose as by his words.

The Provençal noticed, not without fear, that the guards were no longer present; he and Corentin were alone with the family. The younger man drew a small dagger from his pocket, and began to force the lock of the box. Just then the desperate galloping of a horse was heard upon the road and then upon the pavement by the lawn; but most horrible of all was the fall and sighing of the animal, which seemed to drop all at once at the door of the middle tower. A convulsion like that which a thunderbolt might produce shook the spectators when Laurence, the trailing of whose riding-habit announced her coming, entered the room. The servants hastily formed into two lines to let her pass.

In spite of her rapid ride, the girl had felt the full anguish the discovery of the conspiracy must needs cause her. All her hopes were overthrown! she had galloped through ruins as her thoughts turned to the necessity of submission to the Consular government. Were it not for the danger which threatened the four



gentlemen, and which served as a tonic to conquer her weariness and her despair, she would have dropped asleep on the way. The mare was almost killed in her haste to reach the château, and stand between her cousins and death. As all present looked at the heroic girl, pale, her features drawn, her veil aside, her whip in her hand, standing on the threshold of the door, whence her burning glance grasped the whole scene and comprehended it, each knew from the almost imperceptible motion which crossed the soured and bitter face of Corentin, that the real adversaries had met. A terrible duel was about to begin.

Noticing the box, now in the hands of Corentin, the countess raised her whip and sprang rapidly towards him. Striking his hands with so violent a blow that the casket fell to the ground, she seized it, flung it into the middle of the fire, and stood with her back to the chimney in a threatening attitude before either of the agents recovered from their surprise. The scorn which flamed from her eyes, her pale brow, her disdainful lips, were even more insulting than the haughty action which treated Corentin as though he were a venomous reptile. Old d'Hauteserre felt himself once more a cavalier; all his blood rushed to his face, and he grieved that he had no sword. The servants trembled for an instant with joy. The vengeance they had called down upon these men had come. But their joy

was driven back within their souls by a terrible fear; the gendarmes were still heard coming and going in the garrets.

The *spy* — noun of strength, under which all shades of the police are confounded, for the public has never chosen to specify in language the varieties of those who compose this dispensary of social remedies so essential to all governments — the spy has this curious and magnificent quality: he never becomes angry; he possesses the Christian humility of a priest; his eyes are stolid with an indifference which he holds as a barrier against the world of fools who do not understand him; his forehead is adamant under insult; he pursues his ends like a reptile whose carapace is fractured only by a cannonball; but (like that reptile) he is all the more furious when the blow does reach him, because he believed his armor invulnerable. The lash of the whip upon his fingers was to Corentin, pain apart, the cannonball that cracked the shell. Coming from that magnificent and noble girl, this action, emblematic of her disgust, humiliated him, not only in the eyes of the people about him, but in his own.

Peyrade sprang to the hearth, caught Laurence's foot, raised it, and compelled her, out of modesty, to throw herself on the sofa, where she had lately lain asleep. The scene, like other contrasts in human things, was burlesque in the midst of terror. Peyrade

scorched his hand as he dashed it into the fire to seize the box ; but he got it, threw it on the floor and sat down upon it. These little actions were done with great rapidity and without a word being uttered. Cor-entin, recovering from the pain of the blow, caught Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne by both hands, and held her.

“ Do not compel me to use force against you,” he said, with withering politeness.

Peyrade's action had extinguished the fire by the natural process of suppressing the air.

“ Gendarmes ! here ! ” he cried, still occupying his ridiculous position.

“ Will you promise to behave yourself ? ” said Cor-entin, insolently, addressing Laurence, and picking up his dagger, but not committing the great fault of threatening her with it.

“ The secrets of that box do not concern the government,” she answered, with a tinge of melancholy in her tone and manner. “ When you have read the letters it contains you will, in spite of your infamy, feel ashamed of having read them — that is, if you can still feel shame at anything,” she added, after a pause.

The abbé looked at her as if to say, “ For God's sake, be calm ! ”

Peyrade rose. The bottom of the box, which had been nearly burned through, left a mark upon the floor ;

the lid was scorched and the sides gave way. The grotesque Scævola, who had offered to the god of the Police and Terror the seat of his apricot breeches, opened the two sides of the box as if it had been a book, and slid three letters and two locks of hair upon the card-table. He was about to smile at Corentin when he perceived that the locks were of two shades of gray. Corentin released Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's hands and went up to the table to read the letter from which the hair had fallen.

Laurence rose, moved to the table beside the spies, and said: — "Read it aloud; that shall be your punishment."

As the two men continued to read to themselves, she herself read out the following words: —

DEAR LAURENCE: — My husband and I have heard of your noble conduct on the day of our arrest. We know that you love our dear twins as much, almost, as we love them ourselves. Therefore it is with you that we leave a token which will be both precious and sad to them. The executioner has come to cut our hair, for we are to die in a few moments; he has promised to put into your hands the only remembrance we are able to leave to our beloved orphans. Keep these last remains of us and give them to our sons in happier days. We have kissed these locks of hair and have laid our blessing upon them. Our last thought will be of our sons, of you, and of God. Love them, Laurence.

BERTHE DE CINQ-CYGNÉ.

JEAN DE SIMEUSE.

Tears came to the eyes of all the household as they listened to the letter.

Laurence looked at the agents with a petrifying glance and said, in a firm voice : —

“ You have less pity than the executioner.”

Corentin quietly folded the hair in the letter, laid the letter aside on the table, and put a box of counters on the top of it as if to prevent its blowing away. His coolness in the midst of the general emotion was horrible.

Peyrade unfolded the other letters.

“ Oh, as for those,” said Laurence, “ they are very much alike. You heard the will ; you can now hear of its fulfilment. In future I shall have no secrets from any one.”

1794, ANDERNACH. Before the battle.

MY DEAR LAURENCE, — I love you for life and I wish you to know it. But you ought also to know, in case I die, that my brother, Paul-Marie, loves you as much as I love you. My only consolation in dying would be the thought that you might some day make my brother your husband without being forced to see me die of jealousy — which must surely happen if, both of us being alive, you preferred him to me. After all, that preference seems natural, for he is, perhaps, more worthy of your love than I —

MARIE-PAUL.

“ Here is the other letter,” she said, with the color in her cheeks.

ANDERNACH. Before the battle.

MY KIND LAURENCE, — My heart is sad; but Marie-Paul has a gayer nature, and will please you more than I am able to do. Some day you will have to choose between us — well, though I love you passionately —

“ You are corresponding with *émigrés*,” said Peyrade, interrupting Laurence, and holding the letters between himself and the light to see if they contained between the lines any treasonable writing with invisible ink.

“ Yes,” replied Laurence, folding the precious letters, the paper of which was already yellow with time. “ But by virtue of what right do you presume to violate my dwelling and my personal liberty? ”

“ Ah, that’s the point ! ” cried Peyrade. “ By what right, indeed ! — it is time to let you know it, beautiful aristocrat,” he added, taking a warrant from his pocket, which came from the minister of justice and was countersigned by the minister of the interior. “ See, the authorities have their eye upon you.”

“ We might also ask you,” said Corentin, in her ear, “ by what right you harbor in this house the assassins of the First Consul. You have applied your whip to my hands in a manner that authorizes me to take my revenge upon your cousins, whom I came here to save.”

At the mere movement of her lips and the glance which Laurence cast upon Corentin, the abbé guessed what that great artist was saying, and he made her a

sign to be distrustful, which no one intercepted but Goulard. Peyrade struck the cover of the box to see if there were a double top.

“Don’t break it!” she exclaimed, taking the cover from him.

She took a pin, pushed the head of one of the carved figures, and the two halves of the top, joined by a spring, opened. In the hollow half lay miniatures of the Messieurs de Simeuse, in the uniform of the army of Condé, two portraits on ivory done in Germany. Corentin, who felt himself in presence of an adversary worthy of his efforts, called Peyrade aside into a corner of the room and conferred with him.

“How could you throw *that* into the fire?” said the abbé, speaking to Laurence and pointing to the letter of the marquise which inclosed the locks of hair.

For all answer the young girl shrugged her shoulders significantly. The abbé comprehended then that she had made the sacrifice to mislead the agents and gain time; he raised his eyes to heaven with a gesture of admiration.

“Where did they arrest Gothard, whom I hear crying?” she asked him, loud enough to be overheard.

“I don’t know,” said the abbé.

“Did he reach the farm?”

“The farm!” whispered Peyrade to Corentin. “Let us send there.”

“No,” said Corentin; “that girl never trusted her cousins’ safety to a farmer. She is playing with us. Do as I tell you, so that we may n’t have to leave without detecting something, after committing the great blunder of coming here at all.”

Corentin stationed himself before the fire, lifting the long pointed skirts of his coat to warm himself and assuming the air, manner, and tone of a gentleman who was paying a visit.

“Mesdames, you can go to bed, and the servants also. Monsieur le maire, your services are no longer needed. The sternness of our orders does not permit us to act otherwise than as we have done; but as soon as the walls, which seem to me rather thick, have been thoroughly examined, we shall take our departure.”

The mayor bowed to the company and retired; but neither the abbé nor Mademoiselle Goujet stirred. The servants were too uneasy not to watch the fate of their young mistress. Madame d’Hauteserre, who, from the moment of Laurence’s entrance, had studied her with the anxiety of a mother, rose, took her by the arm, led her aside and said in a low voice, “Have you seen them?”

“Do you think I could have let your sons be under this roof without your knowing it?” replied Laurence. “Durieu,” she added, “see if it is possible to save my poor Stella; she is still breathing.”



“She must have gone a great distance,” said Corentin.

“Forty miles in three hours,” she answered, addressing the abbé, who watched her with amazement. “I started at half-past nine, and it was well past one when I returned.”

She looked at the clock which said half-past two.

“So you don’t deny that you have ridden forty miles?” said Corentin.

“No,” she said. “I admit that my cousins, in their perfect innocence, expected not to be excluded from the amnesty, and were on their way to Cinq-Cygne. When I found that the *Sieur Malin* was plotting to injure them, I went to warn them to return to Germany, where they will be before the telegraph can have guarded the frontier. If I have done wrong I shall be punished for it.”

This answer, which Laurence had carefully considered, was so probable in all its parts that Corentin’s convictions were shaken. In that decisive moment, when every soul present hung suspended, as it were, on the faces of the two adversaries, and all eyes turned from Corentin to Laurence and from Laurence to Corentin, again the gallop of a horse, coming from the forest, resounded on the road and from there through the gates to the paved courtyard. Frightful anxiety was stamped on every face.

Peyrade entered, his eyes gleaming with joy. He went hastily to Corentin and said, loud enough for the countess to hear him: "We have caught Michu."

Laurence, to whom the agony, fatigue, and tension of all her intellectual faculties had given an unusual color, turned white and fell back almost fainting on a chair. Madame Durieu, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre sprang to help her, for she was suffocating. She signed to cut the frogging of her habit.

"Duped!" said Corentin to Peyrade. "I am certain now they are on their way to Paris. Change the orders."

They left the room and the house, placing one gendarme on guard at the door of the salon. The infernal cleverness of the two men had gained a terrible advantage by taking Laurence in the trap of a not uncommon trick.

## IX.

## FOILED.

AT six o'clock in the morning, as day was dawning, Corentin and Peyrade returned. Having explored the covered way they were satisfied that horses had passed through it to reach the forest. They were now awaiting the report of the captain of gendarmerie sent to reconnoitre the neighborhood. Leaving the château in charge of a corporal, they went to the tavern at Cinq-Cygne to get their breakfast, giving orders that Gothard, who never ceased to reply to all questions with a burst of tears, should be set at liberty, also Catherine, who still continued silent and immovable. Catherine and Gothard went to the salon to kiss the hands of their mistress, who lay exhausted on the sofa; Durieu also went in to tell her that Stella would recover, but needed great care.

The mayor, uneasy and inquisitive, met Peyrade and Corentin in the village. He declared that he could not allow such important officials to breakfast in a miserable tavern, and he took them to his own house. The abbey was only three quarters of a mile distant. On the way, Peyrade remarked that the corporal of Arcis had sent no news of Michu or of Violette.

"We are dealing with very able people," said Corentin; "they are stronger than we. The priest no doubt has a finger in all this."

Just as the mayor's wife was ushering her guests into a vast dining-room (without any fire) the lieutenant of gendarmes arrived with an anxious air.

"We met the horse of the corporal of Arcis in the forest without his master," he said to Peyrade.

"Lieutenant," cried Corentin, "go instantly to Michu's house and find out what is going on there. They must have murdered the corporal."

This news interfered with the mayor's breakfast. Corentin and Peyrade swallowed their food with the rapidity of hunters halting for a meal, and drove back to the château in their wicker carriage, so as to be ready to start at the first call for any point where their presence might be necessary. When the two men reappeared in the salon into which they had brought such trouble, terror, grief, and anxiety, they found Laurence, in a dressing-gown, Monsieur d'Hauteserre and his wife, the abbé and his sister, sitting round the fire, to all appearance tranquil.

"If they had caught Michu," Laurence told herself, "they would have brought him with them. I have the mortification of knowing that I was not mistress of myself, and that I threw some light upon the matter for those wretches; but the harm can be undone — How

long are we to be your prisoners?" she asked sarcastically, with an easy manner.

"How can she know anything about Michu? No one from the outside has got near the château; she is laughing at us," said the two agents to each other by a look.

"We shall not inconvenience you long," replied Corentin. "In three hours from now we shall offer our regrets for having troubled your solitude."

No one replied. This contemptuous silence redoubled Corentin's inward rage. Laurence and the abbé (the two minds of their little world) had talked the man over and drawn their conclusions. Gothard and Catherine had set the breakfast-table near the fire and the abbé and his sister were sharing the meal. Neither masters nor servants paid the slightest attention to the two spies, who walked up and down the garden, the courtyard or the lawn, returning every now and then to the salon.

At half-past two the lieutenant reappeared.

"I found the corporal," he said to Corentin, "lying in the road which leads from the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne to the farm at Bellache. He has no wound, only a bad contusion of the head, caused, apparently, by his fall. He told me he had been lifted suddenly off his horse and flung so violently on the ground that he could not discover how the thing was done. His feet left the

stirrups, which was lucky, for he might have been killed by the horse dragging him. We put him in charge of Michu and Violette — ”

“ Michu ! is Michu in his own house ? ” said Corentin, glancing at Laurence.

The countess smiled ironically, like a woman obtaining her revenge.

“ He is bargaining with Violette about the sale of some land,” said the lieutenant. “ They seemed to me drunk ; and it’s no wonder, for they have been drinking all night and discussing the matter, and they have n’t come to terms yet.”

“ Did Violette tell you so ? ” cried Corentin.

“ Yes,” said the lieutenant.

“ Nothing is right if we don’t attend to it ourselves ! ” cried Peyrade, looking at Corentin, who doubted the lieutenant’s news as much as the other did.

“ At what hour did you get to Michu’s house ? ” asked Corentin, noticing that the countess had glanced at the clock.

“ About two,” replied the lieutenant.

Laurence covered Monsieur and Madame d’Hauteserre and the abbé and his sister in one comprehensive glance, which made them fancy they were wrapped in an azure mantle ; triumph sparkled in her eyes, she blushed, and the tears welled up beneath her lids. Strong under all misfortunes, the girl knew not how to

weep except from joy. At this moment she was all glorious, especially to the priest, who was sometimes distressed by the virility of her character, and who now caught a glimpse of the infinite tenderness of her woman's nature. But such feelings lay in her soul like a treasure hidden at a great depth beneath a block of granite.

Just then a gendarme entered the salon to ask if he might bring in Michu's son, sent by his father to speak to the gentlemen from Paris. Corentin gave an affirmative nod. François Michu, a sly little chip of the old block, was in the courtyard, where Gothard, now at liberty, got a chance to speak to him for an instant under the eyes of a gendarme. The little fellow managed to slip something into Gothard's hand without being detected, and the latter glided into the salon after him till he reached his mistress, to whom he stealthily conveyed both halves of the wedding-ring, a sure sign, she knew, that Michu had met the four gentlemen and put them in safety.

"My papa wants to know what he's to do with the corporal, who ain't doing well," said François.

"What's the matter with him?" asked Peyrade.

"It's his head — he pitched down hard on the ground," replied the boy. "For a gindarme who knows how to ride it was bad luck — I suppose the horse stumbled. He's got a hole — my! as big as

your fist—in the back of his head. Seems as if he must have hit some big stone, poor man! He may be a gindarme, but he suffers all the same—you'd pity him."

The captain of the gendarmerie now arrived and dismounted in the courtyard. Corentin threw up the window, not to lose time.

"What has been done?"

"We are back like the Dutchmen! We found nothing but five dead horses, their coats stiff with sweat, in the middle of the forest. I have kept them to find out where they came from and who owns them. The forest is surrounded; whoever is in it can't get out."

"At what hour do you suppose those horsemen entered the forest?"

"About half-past twelve."

"Don't let a hare leave that forest without your seeing it," whispered Corentin. "I'll station Peyrade at the village to help you; I am going to see the corporal myself—Go to the mayor's house," he added, still whispering, to Peyrade. "I'll send some able man to relieve you. We shall have to make use of the country-people; examine all faces." He turned towards the family and said in a threatening tone, "Au revoir!"

No one replied, and the two agents left the room.

"What would Fouché say if he knew we had made a domiciliary visit without getting any results?" re-



marked Peyrade as he helped Corentin into the osier vehicle.

"It is n't over yet," replied the other, "those four young men are in the forest. Look there!" and he pointed to Laurence who was watching them from a window. "I once revenged myself on a woman who was worth a dozen of that one and had stirred my bile a good deal less. If this girl comes in the way of my hatchet I'll pay her for the lash of that whip."

"The other was a strumpet," said Peyrade; "this one has rank."

"What difference is that to me? All's fish that swims in the sea," replied Corentin, signing to the gendarme who drove him to whip up.

Ten minutes later the château de Cinq-Cygne was completely evacuated.

"How did they get rid of the corporal?" said Laurence to François Michu, whom she had ordered to sit down and eat some breakfast.

"My father told me it was a matter of life and death and I must n't let anybody get into our house," replied the boy. "I knew when I heard the horses in the forest that I'd got to do with them hounds of gindarmes, and I meant to keep 'em from getting in. So I took some big ropes that were in our garret and fastened one of 'em to a tree at the corner of road. Then I drew the rope high enough to hit the breast of a man

on horseback, and tied it to the tree on the opposite side of the way in the direction where I heard the horses. That barred the road. It did n't miss fire, I can tell you! There was no moon, and the corporal just pitched!—but he was n't killed; they're tough, them gindarmes! I did what I could."

"You have saved us!" said Laurence, kissing him as she took him to the gate. When there, she looked about her and seeing no one she said cautiously, "Have they provisions?"

"I have just taken them twelve pounds of bread and four bottles of wine," said the boy. "They'll be snug for a week."

Returning to the salon, the girl was beset with mute questions in the eyes of all, each of whom looked at her with as much admiration as eagerness.

"But have you really seen them?" cried Madame d'Hauteserre.

The countess put a finger on her lips and smiled; then she left the room and went to bed; her triumph sure, utter weariness had overtaken her.

The shortest road from Cinq-Cygne to Michu's lodge was that which led from the village past the farm at Bellache to the *rond-point* where the Parisian spies had first seen Michu on the preceding evening. The gendarme who was driving Corentin took this way, which was the one the corporal of Arcis had taken. As they

drove along, the agent was on the look-out for signs to show why the corporal had been unhorsed. He blamed himself for having sent but one man on so important an errand, and he drew from this mistake an axiom for the police Code, which he afterwards applied.

“If they have got rid of the corporal,” he said to himself, “they have done as much by Violette. Those five horses have evidently brought the four conspirators and Michu from the neighborhood of Paris to the forest. Has Michu a horse?” he inquired of the gendarme who was driving him and who belonged to the squad from Arcis.

“Yes, and a famous little horse it is,” answered the man, “a hunter from the stables of the ci-devant Marquis de Simeuse. There’s no better beast, though it is nearly fifteen years old. Michu can ride him fifty miles and he won’t turn a hair. He takes mighty good care of him and would n’t sell him at any price.”

“What does the horse look like?”

“He’s brown, turning rather to black; white stockings above the hoofs, thin, all nerves like an Arab.”

“Did you ever see an Arab?”

“In Egypt—last year. I’ve ridden the horses of the mamelukes. We have to serve twelve years in the cavalry, and I was on the Rhine under General Steingel, after that in Italy, and then I followed the First Consul to Egypt. I’ll be a corporal soon.”

“ When I get to Michu’s house go to the stable ; if you have served twelve years in the cavalry you know when a horse is blown. Let me know the condition of Michu’s beast.”

“ See ! that’s where our corporal was thrown,” said the man, pointing to a spot where the road they were following entered the *rond-point*.

“ Tell the captain to come and pick me up at Michu’s, and I’ll go with him to Troyes.”

So saying Corentin got down, and stood about for a few minutes examining the ground. He looked at the two elms which faced each other, — one against the park wall, the other on the bank of the *rond-point* ; then he saw (what no one had yet noticed) the button of a uniform lying in the dust, and he picked it up. Entering the lodge he saw Violette and Michu sitting at the table in the kitchen and talking eagerly. Violette rose, bowed to Corentin, and offered him some wine.

“ Thank you, no ; I came to see the corporal,” said the young man, who saw with half a glance that Violette had been drunk all night.

“ My wife is nursing him upstairs,” said Michu.

“ Well, corporal, how are you ? ” said Corentin who had run up the stairs and found the gendarme with his head bandaged, and lying on Madame Michu’s bed ; his hat, sabre, and shoulder-belt on a chair.

Marthe, faithful to her womanly instincts, and knowing nothing of her son's prowess, was giving all her care to the corporal, assisted by her mother.

"We expect Monsieur Varlet the doctor from Arcis," she said to Corentin; "our servant-lad has gone to fetch him."

"Leave us alone for a moment," said Corentin, a good deal surprised at the scene, which amply proved the innocence of the two women. "Where were you struck?" he asked the man, examining his uniform.

"On the breast," replied the corporal.

"Let's see your belt," said Corentin.

On the yellow band with a white edge, which a recent regulation had made part of the equipment of the guard now called National, was a metal plate a good deal like that of the foresters, on which the law required the inscription of these remarkable words: "Respect to persons and to properties." François's rope had struck the belt and defaced it. Corentin took up the coat and found the place where the button he had picked up upon the road belonged.

"What time did they find you?" asked Corentin.

"About daybreak."

"Did they bring you up here at once?" said Corentin, noticing that the bed had not been slept in.

"Yes."

"Who brought you up?"

"The women and little Michu, who found me unconscious."

"So!" thought Corentin: "evidently they didn't go to bed. The corporal was not shot at, nor struck by any weapon, for an assailant must have been at his own height to strike a blow. Something, some obstacle, was in his way and that unhorsed him. A piece of wood? not possible! an iron chain? that would have left marks. What did you feel?" he said aloud.

"I was knocked over so suddenly —"

"The skin is rubbed off under your chin," said Corentin quickly.

"I think," said the corporal, "that a rope did go over my face."

"I have it!" cried Corentin; "somebody tied a rope from tree to tree to bar the way."

"Like enough," replied the corporal.

Corentin went downstairs to the kitchen.

"Come, you old rascal," Michu was saying to Violette, "let's make an end of this. "One hundred thousand francs for the place, and you are master of my whole property. I shall retire on my income."

"I tell you, as there's a God in heaven, I have n't more than sixty thousand."

"But don't I offer you time to pay the rest? You've kept me here since yesterday, arguing it. The land is in prime order."

"Yes, the soil is good," said Violette.

"Wife, some more wine," cried Michu.

"Have n't you drunk enough?" called down Marthe's mother. "This is the fourteenth bottle since nine o'clock yesterday."

"You have been here since nine o'clock this morning, have n't you?" said Corentin to Violette.

"No, beg your pardon, since last night I have n't left the place, and I've gained nothing after all; the more he makes me drink the more he puts up the price."

"In all markets he who raises his elbow raises a price," said Corentin.

A dozen empty bottles ranged along the table proved the truth of the old woman's words. Just then the gendarme who had driven him made a sign to Corentin, who went to the door to speak to him.

"There is no horse in the stable," said the man.

"You sent your boy on horseback to the château, did n't you?" said Corentin, returning to the kitchen.

"Will he be back soon?"

"No, monsieur," said Marthe, "he went on foot."

"What have you done with your horse, then?"

"I have lent him," said Michu, curtly.

"Come out here, my good fellow," said Corentin;

"I've a word for your ear."

Corentin and Michu left the house.

“The gun which you were loading yesterday at four o’clock you meant to use in murdering the Councillor of State ; but we can’t take you up for that — plenty of intention, but no witnesses. You managed, I don’t know how, to stupefy Violette, and you and your wife and that young rascal of yours spent the night out of doors to warn Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and save her cousins, whom you are hiding here, — though I don’t as yet know where. Your son or your wife threw the corporal off his horse cleverly enough. Well, you’ve got the better of us just now ; you’re a devil of a fellow. But the end is not yet, and you won’t have the last word. Had n’t you better compromise? your masters would be the better for it.”

“Come this way, where we can talk without being overheard,” said Michu, leading the way through the park to the pond.

When Corentin saw the water he looked fixedly at Michu, who was no doubt reckoning on his physical strength to fling the spy into seven feet of mud below three feet of water. Michu replied with a look that was not less fixed. The scene was absolutely as if a cold and flabby boa constrictor had defied one of those tawny, fierce leopards of Brazil.

“I am not thirsty,” said Corentin, stopping short at the edge of the field and putting his hand into his pocket to feel for his dagger.



"We shall never come to terms," said Michu, coldly.

"Mind what you're about, my good fellow; the law has its eye upon you."

"If the law can't see any clearer than you, there's danger to every one," said the bailiff.

"Do you refuse?" said Corentin, in a significant tone.

"I'd rather have my head cut off a hundred times, if that could be done, than come to an agreement with such a villain as you."

Corentin got into his vehicle hastily, after one more comprehensive look at Michu, the lodge, and Couraut, who barked at him. He gave certain orders in passing through Troyes, and then returned to Paris. All the brigades of gendarmerie in the neighborhood received secret instructions and special orders.

During the months of December, January, and February the search was active and incessant, even in remote villages. Spies were in all the taverns. Corentin learned some important facts: a horse like that of Michu had been found dead in the neighborhood of Lagny; the five horses burned in the forest of Noddesme had been sold, for five hundred francs each, by farmers and millers to a man who answered to the description of Michu. When the decree against the accomplices and harborers of Georges was put in force Corentin confined his search to the forest of

Nodesme. After Moreau, the royalists, and Pichegru were arrested no strangers were ever seen about the place.

Michu lost his situation at that time; the notary of Arcis brought him a letter in which Malin, now made senator, requested Grévin to settle all accounts with the bailiff and dismiss him. Michu asked and obtained a formal discharge and became a free man. To the great astonishment of the neighborhood he went to live at Cinq-Cygne, where Laurence made him the farmer of all the reserved land about the château. The day of his installation as farmer coincided with the fatal day of the death of the Duc d'Enghien, when nearly the whole of France heard at the same time of the arrest, trial, condemnation, and death of the prince, — terrible reprisals, which preceded the trial of Polignac, Rivière, and Moreau.

## PART II.

## X.

## ONE AND THE SAME, YET A TWO-FOLD LOVE.

WHILE the new farm-house was being built Michu the Judas, so-called, and his family occupied the rooms over the stables at Cinq-Cygne on the side of the château next to the famous breach. He bought two horses, one for himself and one for François, for they both joined Gothard in accompanying Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne in her many rides, which had for their object, as may well be imagined, the feeding of the four gentlemen and perpetual watching that they were still in safety. François and Gothard, assisted by Couraut and the countess's dogs, went in front and beat the woods all around the hiding-place to make sure that there was no one within sight. Laurence and Michu carried the provisions which Marthe, her mother, and Catherine prepared, unknown to the other servants of the household so as to restrict the secret to themselves, for all were sure that there were spies in the village. These expeditions were never made oftener than twice a week and

on different days and at different hours, sometimes by day, sometimes by night.

These precautions lasted until the trial of Rivière, Polignac, and Moreau ended. When the *senatus-consultum*, which called the dynasty of Bonaparte to the throne and nominated Napoleon as Emperor of the French, was submitted to the French people for acceptance Monsieur d'Hauteserre signed the paper Goulard brought him. When it was made known that the Pope would come to France to crown the Emperor, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne no longer opposed the general desire that her cousins and the young d'Hauteserres should petition to have their names struck off the list of *émigrés*, and be themselves reinstated in their rights as citizens. On this, old d'Hauteserre went to Paris and consulted the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf who knew Talleyrand. That minister, then in favor, conveyed the petition to Josephine, and Josephine gave it to her husband, who was addressed as Emperor, Majesty, Sire, before the result of the popular vote was known. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, Monsieur d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet, who also went to Paris, obtained an interview with Talleyrand, who promised them his support. Napoleon had already pardoned several of the principal actors in the great royalist conspiracy; and yet, though the four gentlemen were merely suspected of complicity, the Emperor, after a meeting of the Coun-

cil of State, called the senator Malin, Fouché, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Lebrun, and Dubois, prefect of police, into his cabinet.

“Gentlemen,” said the future Emperor, who still wore the dress of the First Consul, “we have received from the Sieurs de Simeuse and d’Hauteserre, officers in the army of the Prince de Condé, a request to be allowed to re-enter France.”

“They are here now,” said Fouché.

“Like many others whom I meet in Paris,” remarked Talleyrand.

“I think you have not met these gentlemen,” said Malin, “for they are hidden in the forest of Nodesme, where they consider themselves at home.”

He was careful not to tell the First Consul and Fouché how he himself had given them warning, by talking with Grévin within hearing of Michu, but he made the most of Corentin’s reports and convinced Napoleon that the four gentlemen were sharers in the plot of Rivière and Polignac, with Michu for an accomplice. The prefect of police confirmed these assertions.

“But how could that bailiff know that the conspiracy was discovered?” said the prefect, “for the Emperor and the council and I were the only persons in the secret.”

No one paid attention to this remark.

“If they have been hidden in that forest for the last

seven months and you have not been able to find them," said the Emperor to Fouché, "they have expiated their misdeeds."

"Since they are my enemies as well," said Malin, frightened by the prefect's clear-sightedness, "I desire to follow the magnanimous example of your Majesty; I therefore make myself their advocate and ask that their names be stricken from the list of *émigrés*."

"They will be less dangerous to you here than if they are exiled; for they will now have to swear allegiance to the Empire and the laws," said Fouché, looking at Malin fixedly.

"In what way are they dangerous to the senator?" asked Napoleon.

Talleyrand spoke to the Emperor for some minutes in a low voice. The reinstatement of the Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre appeared to be granted.

"Sire," said Fouché, "rely upon it, you will hear of those men again."

Talleyrand, who had been urged by the Duc de Grandlieu, gave the Emperor pledges in the name of the young men on their honor as gentlemen (a term which had great fascination for Napoleon), to abstain from all attacks upon his Majesty and to submit themselves to his government in good faith.

"Messieurs d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse are not willing to bear arms against France, now that events

have taken their present course," he said, aloud ; " they have little sympathy, it is true, with the Imperial government, but they are just the men that your Majesty ought to conciliate. They will be satisfied to live on French soil and obey the laws."

Then he laid before the Emperor a letter he had received from the brothers in which these sentiments were expressed.

" Anything so frank is likely to be sincere," said the Emperor, returning the letter and looking at Lebrun and Cambacérès. " Have you any further objections ? " he asked of Fouché.

" In your Majesty's interests," replied the future minister of police, " I ask to be allowed to inform these gentlemen of their reinstatement — when it is *really granted*," he added, in a louder tone.

" Very well," said Napoleon, noticing an anxious look on Fouché's face.

The matter did not seem positively decided when the Council rose ; but it had the effect of putting into Napoleon's mind a vague distrust of the four young men. Monsieur d'Hauteserre, believing that all was gained, wrote a letter announcing the good news. The family at Cinq-Cygne were therefore not surprised when, a few days later, Goulard came to inform the countess and Madame d'Hauteserre that they were to send the four gentlemen to Troyes, where the prefect would show

them the decree reinstating them in their rights and administer to them the oath of allegiance to the Empire and the laws. Laurence replied that she would send the notification to her cousins and the Messieurs d'Hauteserre.

"Then they are not here?" said Goulard.

Madame d'Hauteserre looked anxiously after Laurence, who left the room to consult Michu. Michu saw no reason why the young men should not be released at once from their hiding-place. Laurence, Michu, his son, and Gothard therefore started as soon as possible for the forest, taking an extra horse, for the countess resolved to accompany her cousins to Troyes and return with them. The whole household, made aware of the good news, gathered on the lawn to witness the departure of the happy cavalcade. The four young men issued from their long confinement, mounted their horses, and took the road to Troyes, accompanied by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Michu, with the help of his son and Gothard, closed the entrance to the cellar, and started to return home on foot. On the way he recollected that he had left the forks and spoons and a silver cup, which the young men had been using, in the cave, and he went back for them alone. When he reached the edge of the pond he heard voices, and went straight to the entrance of the cave through the brushwood.



“Have you come for your silver?” said Peyrade, showing his big red nose through the branches.

Without knowing why, for at any rate his young masters were safe, Michu felt a sharp agony in all his joints, so keen was the sense of vague, indefinable coming evil which took possession of him; but he went forward at once, and found Corentin on the stairs with a taper in his hand.

“We are not very harsh,” he said to Michu; “we might have seized your *ci-devants* any day for the last week; but we knew they were reinstated — You’re a tough fellow to deal with, and you gave us too much trouble not to make us anxious to satisfy our curiosity about this hiding-place of yours.”

“I’d give something,” cried Michu, “to know how and by whom we have been sold.”

“If that puzzles you, old fellow,” said Peyrade, laughing, “look at your horses’ shoes, and you’ll see that you betrayed yourselves.”

“Well, there need be no rancor!” said Corentin, whistling for the captain of *gendarmerie* and their horses.

“So that rascally Parisian blacksmith who shod the horses in the English fashion and left *Cinq-Cygne* only the other day was their spy!” thought Michu. “They must have followed our tracks when the ground was damp. Well, we’re quits now!”

Michu consoled himself by thinking that the discovery was of no consequence, as the young men were now safe, Frenchmen once more, and at liberty. Yet his first presentiment was a true one. The police, like the Jesuits, have the one virtue of never abandoning their friends or their enemies.

Old d'Hauteserre returned from Paris and was more than surprised not to be the first to bring the news. Durieu prepared a succulent dinner, the servants donned their best clothes, and the whole household impatiently awaited the exiles, who arrived about four o'clock, happy, — and yet humiliated, for they found they were to be under police surveillance for two years, obliged to present themselves at the prefecture every month and ordered to remain in the commune of Cinq-Cygne during the said two years. "I'll send you the papers for signature," the prefect said to them. "Then, in the course of a few months, you can ask to be relieved of these conditions, which are imposed on all of Pichegru's accomplices. I will back your request."

These restrictions, fairly deserved, rather dispirited the young men, but Laurence laughed at them.

"The Emperor of the French," she said, "was badly brought up; he has not yet acquired the habit of bestowing favors graciously."

The party found all the inhabitants of the château at the gates, and a goodly proportion of the people of the

village waiting on the road to see the young men, whose adventures had made them famous throughout the department. Madame d'Hauteserre held her sons to her breast for a long time, her face covered with tears ; she was unable to speak and remained silent, though happy, through a part of the evening. No sooner had the Simeuse twins dismounted than a cry of surprise arose on all sides, caused by their amazing resemblance, — the same look, the same voice, the same actions. They both had the same movement in rising from their saddles, in throwing their leg over the crupper of their horses when dismounting, in flinging the reins upon the animal's neck. Their dress, precisely the same, contributed to this likeness. They wore boots *à la* Suwaroff, made to fit the instep, tight trousers of white leather, green hunting-jackets with metal buttons, black cravats, and buckskin gloves. The two young men, just thirty-one years of age, were — to use a term in vogue in those days — charming cavaliers, of medium height but well set up, brilliant eyes with long lashes, floating in liquid like those of children, black hair, noble brows, and olive skin. Their speech, gentle as that of a woman, fell graciously from their fresh red lips ; their manners, more elegant and polished than those of the provincial gentlemen, showed that knowledge of men and things had given them that supplementary education which makes its possessor a man of the world.

Not lacking money, thanks to Michu, during their emigration, they had been able to travel and be received at foreign courts. Old d'Hautesserre and the abbé thought them rather haughty ; but in their present position this may have been the sign of nobility of character. They possessed all the eminent little marks of a careful education, to which they added a wonderful dexterity in bodily exercises. Their only dissimilarity was in the region of ideas. The youngest charmed others by his gayety, the eldest by his melancholy ; but the contrast, which was purely spiritual, was not at first observable.

“ Ah, wife,” whispered Michu in Marthe’s ear, “ how could one help devoting one’s self to those young fellows ? ”

Marthe, who admired them as a wife and mother, nodded her head prettily and pressed her husband’s hand. The servants were allowed to kiss their new masters.

During their seven months’ seclusion in the forest (which the young men had brought upon themselves) they had several times committed the imprudence of taking walks about their hiding-place, carefully guarded by Michu, his son, and Gothard. During these walks, taken usually on starlit nights, Laurence, reuniting the thread of their past and present lives, felt the utter impossibility of choosing between the brothers. A

pure and equal love for each divided her heart. She fancied indeed that she had two hearts. On their side, the brothers dared not speak to themselves of their impending rivalry. Perhaps all three were trusting to time and accident. The condition of her mind on this subject acted no doubt upon Laurence as they entered the house, for she hesitated a moment, and then took an arm of each as she entered the salon followed by Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, who were occupied with their sons. Just then a cheer burst from the servants, "Long live the Cinq-Cygne and the Simeuse families!" Laurence turned round, still between the brothers, and made a charming gesture of acknowledgment.

When these nine persons came to actually observe each other, — for in all meetings, even in the bosom of families, there comes a moment when friends observe those from whom they have been long parted, — the first glance which Adrien d'Hauteserre cast upon Laurence seemed to his mother and to the abbé to betray love. Adrien, the younger of the d'Hauteserres, had a sweet and tender soul; his heart had remained adolescent in spite of the catastrophes which had nerved the man. Like many young heroes, kept virgin in spirit by perpetual peril, he was daunted by the timidities of youth. In this he was very different from his brother, a man of rough manners, a great hunter, an intrepid

soldier, full of resolution, but coarse in fibre and without activity of mind or delicacy in matters of the heart. One was all soul, the other all action; and yet they both possessed in the same degree that sense of honor which is the vital essence of a gentleman. Dark, short, slim and wiry, Adrien d'Hauteserre gave an impression of strength; whereas Robert, who was tall, pale and fair, seemed weakly. Adrien, nervous in temperament, was stronger in soul; while his brother though lymphatic, was fonder of bodily exercise. Families often present these singularities of contrast, the causes of which it might be interesting to examine; but they are mentioned here merely to explain how it was that Adrien was not likely to find a rival in his brother. Robert's affection for Laurence was that of a relation, the respect of a noble for a girl of his own caste. In matters of sentiment the elder d'Hauteserre belonged to the class of men who consider woman as an appendage to man, limiting her sphere to the physical duties of maternity; demanding perfection in that respect, but regarding her mentally as of no account. To such men the admittance of woman as an actual sharer in society, in the body politic, in the family, meant the subversion of the social system. In these days we are so far removed from this theory of primitive people that almost all women, even those who do not desire the fatal emancipation offered by the new sects, will be

shocked in merely hearing of it; but it must be owned that Robert d'Hauteserre had the misfortune to think in that way. Robert was a man of the middle-ages, Adrien a man of to-day. These differences instead of hindering their affection had drawn its bonds the closer. On the first evening after the return of the young men these shades of character were caught and understood by the abbé, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre, who, while playing their boston, were secretly foreseeing the difficulties of the future.

At twenty-three years of age, having passed through the many reflections of a long solitude and the anguish of a defeated enterprise, Laurence had become a woman, and felt within her an absorbing desire for affection. She now put forth all the graces of her mind and was charming; she revealed the hidden beauties of her tender heart with the simple candor of a child. For the last thirteen years she had been a woman only through suffering; she longed to obtain amends for it, and she showed herself as loving and winning as she had been, up to this time, strong and great.

The four elders, who were the last to leave the salon that night, admitted to each other that they felt uneasy at the new position of this charming girl. What power might not passion have on a young woman of her character and with her nobility of soul? The twin brothers loved her with one and the same love and a blind devo-

tion; which of the two would Laurence choose? To choose one was to kill the other. Countess in her own right, she could bring her husband a title and certain prerogatives, together with a long lineage. Perhaps in thinking of these advantages the elder of the twins, the Marquis de Simeuse, would sacrifice himself to give Laurence to his brother, who, according to the old laws, was poor and without a title. But would the younger brother deprive the elder of the happiness of having Laurence for a wife? At a distance, this strife of love and generosity might do no harm, — in fact, so long as the brothers were facing danger the chances of war might end the difficulty; but what would be the result of this reunion? When Marie-Paul and Paul-Marie reached the age when passions rise to their greatest height could they share, as now, the looks and words and attentions of their cousin? must there not inevitably arise a jealousy between them the consequences of which might be horrible? What would then become of the unity of those beautiful lives, one in heart though twain in body? To these questionings, passed from one to another as they finished their game, Madame d'Hauteserre replied that in her opinion Laurence would not marry either of her cousins. The poor lady had experienced that evening one of those inexplicable presentiments which are secrets between the mother's heart and God.

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Laurence, in her inward consciousness, was not less alarmed at finding herself tête-a-tête with her cousins. To the active drama of conspiracy, to the dangers which the brothers had incurred, to the pain and penalties of their exile, was now succeeding another sort of drama, of which she had never thought. This noble girl could not resort to the violent means of refusing to marry either of the twins; and she was too honest a woman to marry one and keep an irresistible passion for the other in her heart. To remain unmarried, to weary her cousins' love by no decision, and then to take the one who was faithful to her in spite of her caprices, was a solution of the difficulty not so much sought for by her as vaguely admitted. As she fell asleep that night she told herself the wisest course to follow was to let things take their chance. Chance is, in love, the providence of women.

The next morning Michu went to Paris, whence he returned a few days later with four fine horses for his new masters. In six weeks' time the hunting would begin, and the young countess sagely reflected that the violent excitements of that exercise would be a help against the tête-a-têtes of the château. At first, however, an unexpected result surprised the spectators of these strange loves and roused their admiration. Without any premeditated agreement the brothers rivalled each other in attentions to Laurence, with a

sense of pleasure in so doing which appeared to suffice them. The relation between themselves and Laurence was just as fraternal as that between themselves. What could be more natural? After so long an absence they felt the necessity of studying her, of knowing her well and letting her know them, leaving to her the right of choice. They were sustained in this first trial by the mutual affection which made their double life one and the same life.

Love, like their own mother, was unable to distinguish between the brothers. Laurence, was obliged (in order to know them apart and make no mistakes) to give them different cravats — to the elder a white one, to the younger black. Without this perfect resemblance, this identity of life, which misled all about them, such a situation would be justly thought impossible. It can, indeed, be explained only by the fact itself, which is one of those which men do not believe in unless they see them; and then the mind is more bewildered by having to explain them than by the actual sight which caused belief. If Laurence spoke, her voice echoed in two hearts equally faithful and loving with one tone. Did she give utterance to an intelligent, or witty, or noble thought, her glance encountered the delight expressed in two glances which followed her every movement, interpreted her slightest wish, and beamed upon her ever with a new expression, gayety

in the one, tender melancholy in the other. In any matter that concerned their mistress the brothers showed an admirable quick-wittedness of heart coupled with instant action which (to use the abbé's own expression) approached the sublime. Often, if something had to be fetched, if it was a question of some little attention which men delight to pay to a beloved woman, the elder would leave that pleasure to the younger with a look at Laurence that was proud and tender. The younger, on the other hand, put all his own pride into paying such debts. This rivalry of noble natures in a feeling which leads men often to the jealous ferocity of the beasts amazed the old people who were watching it, and bewildered their ideas.

Such little details often drew tears to the eyes of the countess. A single sensation, which is perhaps all-powerful in some rare organizations, will give an idea of Laurence's emotions; it may be perceived by recalling the perfect unison of two fine voices (like those of Malibran and Sontag) in some harmonious *duo*, or the blending of two instruments touched by the hand of genius, their melodious tones entering the soul like the passionate sighing of one heart. Sometimes, seeing the Marquis de Simeuse buried in an arm-chair and glancing from time to time with deepest melancholy at his brother and Laurence who were talking and laughing, the abbé believed him capable of making the great

sacrifice ; presently, however, the priest would see in the young man's eyes the flash of an unconquerable passion. Whenever either of the brothers found himself alone with Laurence he might reasonably suppose himself the one preferred.

" I fancy then that there is but one of them," explained the countess to the abbé when he questioned her. That answer showed the priest her total want of coquetry. Laurence did not conceive that she was loved by two men.

" But, my dear child," said Madame d'Hauteserre one evening (her own son silently dying of love for Laurence), " you must choose ! "

" Oh, let us be happy," she replied ; " God will save us from ourselves."

Adrien d'Hauteserre buried within his breast the jealousy that was consuming him ; he kept the secret of his torture, aware of how little he could hope. He tried to be content with the happiness of seeing the charming woman who during the few months this struggle lasted shone in all her brilliancy. In one sense Laurence had become coquettish, taking that dainty care of her person which women who are loved delight in. She followed the fashions, and went more than once to Paris to deck her beauty with *chiffons* or some choice novelty. Desirous of giving her cousins a sense of home and its every enjoyment, from which they had so

long been severed, she made her château, in spite of the remonstrances of her late guardian, the most completely comfortable house in Champagne.

Robert d'Hauteserre saw nothing of this hidden drama; he never noticed his brother's love for Laurence. As to the girl herself, he liked to tease her about her coquetry, — for he confounded that odious defect with the natural desire to please; he was always mistaken in matters of feeling, taste, and the higher ethics. So, whenever this man of the middle-ages appeared on the scene, Laurence immediately made him, unknown to himself, the clown of the play; she amused her cousins by arguing with Robert, and leading him, step by step, into some bog of ignorance and stupidity. She excelled in such clever mischief, which, to be really successful, must leave the victim content with himself. And yet, though his nature was a coarse one, Robert never, during those delightful months (the only happy period in the lives of the three young people) said one virile word which might have brought matters to a crisis between Laurence and her cousins. He was struck with the sincerity of the brothers; he saw how the one could be glad at the happiness of the other and yet suffer anguish in the depths of his heart, and he did perceive how a woman might shrink from showing tenderness to one which would grieve the other. This perception on Robert's part was a just one; it explains

a situation which, in times of faith, when the sovereign pontiff had power to intervene and cut the Gordian knot of such phenomena (allied to the deepest and most impenetrable mysteries), would have found its solution. The Revolution had deepened the Catholic faith in these young hearts, and religion now rendered this crisis in their lives the more severe, because nobility of character is ever heightened by the grandeur of circumstances. A sense of this truth kept Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the abbé from the slightest fear of any unworthy result on the part of the brothers or of Laurence.

This private drama, secretly developing within the limits of the family life where each member watched it silently, ran its course so rapidly and withal so slowly, it carried with it so many un-hoped for pleasures, trifling jars, frustrated fancies, hopes reversed, anxious waitings, delayed explanations and mute avowals that the dwellers at Cinq-Cygne paid no attention to the public drama of the Emperor's coronation. At times these passions made a truce and sought distraction in the violent enjoyment of hunting, when weariness of body took from the soul all occasions to wander in the dangerous meads of revery. Neither Laurence nor her cousins had a thought now for public affairs; each day brought its palpitating and absorbing interests for their hearts.

“ Really,” said Mademoiselle Goujet one evening, “ I don’t know which of all the lovers loves the most.”

Adrien, who happened to be alone in the salon with the four card-players, raised his eyes and turned pale. For the last few days his only hold on life had been the pleasure of seeing Laurence and of listening to her.

“ I think,” said the abbé, “ that the countess, being a woman, loves with the greater abandonment to love.”

Laurence, the twins, and Robert entered the room soon after. The newspapers had just arrived. England, seeing the failure of all conspiracies attempted within the borders of France, was now arming Europe against their common enemy. The disaster at Trafalgar had overthrown one of the most amazing plans which human genius ever conceived ; by which, if it had succeeded, the Emperor would have paid the nation for his election by the ruin of the British power. The camp at Boulogne had just been raised. Napoleon, whose soldiers were, as always, inferior in numbers to the enemy, was about to carry the war into parts of Europe where he had not before waged it. The whole world was breathless, awaiting the results of the campaign.

“ He’ll surely be defeated this time,” said Robert, laying down the paper.

“ The armies of Austria and of Russia are before him,” said Marie-Paul.

"He has never fought in Germany," added Paul-Marie.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"The Emperor," answered the three gentlemen.

The jealous girl threw a disdainful look at her twin lovers, which humiliated them while it rejoiced the heart of Adrien, who made a gesture of admiration and gave her one proud look, which said plainly that *he* thought only of her, — of Laurence.

"I told you," said the abbé, in a low voice, "that love would some day cause her to forget her animosity."

It was the first, last, and only reproach the brothers ever received from her; but certainly at that moment their love, which could still be distracted by national events, was inferior to that of Laurence, which, absorbed her mind so completely that she only knew of the amazing triumph at Austerlitz by overhearing a discussion between Monsieur d'Hauteserre and his sons.

Faithful to his ideas of submission, the old man wished both Robert and Adrien to re-enter the French army and apply for service; they could, he thought, be reinstated in their rank and soon find an opening to military honors. But royalist opinions were now all-powerful at Cinq-Cygne. The four young men and Laurence laughed at their prudent elder, who seemed to foresee a coming evil. Possibly, prudence is less a virtue than the exercise of some instinct, or *sense* of the



mind (if it is allowable to couple those two words). A day will come, no doubt, when physiologists and philosophers will both admit that the senses are, in some way, the sheath or vehicle of a keen and penetrative active power which issues from the mind.

## XI.

## WISE COUNSEL.

AFTER peace was concluded between France and Austria, towards the end of the month of February, 1806, a relative, whose influence had been employed for the reinstatement of the Simeuse brothers, and who was destined later to give them signal proofs of family attachment, the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, whose estates extended from the department of the Seine-et-Marne to that of the Aube, arrived one morning at Cinq-Cygne in a species of calèche which was then named in derision a *berlingot*. When this shabby carriage was driven past the windows the inhabitants of the château, who were at breakfast, were convulsed with laughter; but when the bald head of the old man was seen issuing from behind the leather curtain of the vehicle Monsieur d'Hauteserre told his name, and all present rose instantly to receive and do honor to the head of the house of Chargebœuf.

“We have done wrong to let him come to us,” said the Marquis de Simeuse to his brother and the d'Hauteserres; “we ought to have gone to him and made our acknowledgments.”

A servant, dressed as a peasant, who drove the horses from a seat on a level with the body of the carriage, slipped his cartman's whip into a coarse leather socket, and got down from the box to assist the marquis from the carriage; but Adrien and the younger de Simeuse prevented him, unbuttoned the leather apron, and helped the old man out in spite of his protestations. This gentleman of the old school chose to consider his yellow *berlingot* with its leather curtains a most convenient and excellent equipage. The servant, assisted by Gothard, unharnessed the stout horses with shining flanks, accustomed no doubt to do as much duty at the plough as in a carriage.

"In spite of this cold weather! Why, you are a knight of the olden time," said Laurence, to her visitor, taking his arm and leading him into the salon.

"What has he come for?" thought old d'Hauteserre.

Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a handsome old gentleman of sixty-six, in light-colored breeches, his small weak legs encased in colored stockings, wore powder, pigeon-wings and a queue. His green cloth hunting-coat with gold buttons was braided and frogged with gold. His white waistcoat glittered with gold embroidery. This apparel, still in vogue among old people, became his face, which was not unlike that of Frederick the Great. He never put on his three-cornered hat lest he should destroy the effect of the half-moon traced upon his

cranium by a layer of powder. His right hand, resting on a hooked cane, held both cane and hat in a manner worthy of Louis XIV. The fine old gentleman took off his wadded silk pelisse and seated himself in an arm-chair, holding the three-cornered hat and the cane between his knees in an attitude the secret of which has never been grasped by any but the *roués* of Louis XV.'s court, an attitude which left the hands free to play with a snuff-box, always a precious trinket. Accordingly the marquis drew from the pocket of his waistcoat, which was closed by a flap embroidered in gold arabesques, a sumptuous snuff-box. While fingering his own pinch and offering the box around him with another charming gesture accompanied with kindly smiles, he noticed the pleasure which his visit gave. He seemed then to comprehend why these young *émigrés* had been remiss in their duty towards him, and to be saying to himself, "When we are making love we can't make visits."

"You will stay with us some days?" said Laurence.

"Impossible," he replied. "If we were not so separated by events (for as to distance, you go farther than that which lies between us) you would know, my dear child, that I have daughters, daughters-in-law, and grand-children. All these dear creatures would be very uneasy if I did not return to them to-night, and I have forty-five miles to go."

“Your horses are in good condition,” said the Marquis de Simeuse.

“Oh! I am just from Troyes, where I had business yesterday.”

After the customary polite inquiries for the Marquise de Chargebœuf and other matters really uninteresting but about which politeness assumes that we are keenly interested, it dawned on Monsieur d’Hauteserre that the old gentleman had come to warn his young relatives against imprudence. He remarked that times were changed and no one could tell what the Emperor might not become.

“Oh!” said Laurence, “he’ll make himself God.”

The Marquis spoke of the wisdom of concession. When he stated, with more emphasis and authority than he put into his other remarks, the necessity of submission, Monsieur d’Hauteserre looked at his sons with an almost supplicating air.

“Would you serve that man?” asked the Marquis de Simeuse.

“Yes, I would, if the interests of my family required it,” replied Monsieur de Chargebœuf.

Gradually the old man made them aware, though vaguely, of some threatened danger. When Laurence begged him to explain the nature of it, he advised the four young men to refrain from hunting and to keep themselves as much in retirement as possible.

“ You treat the domain of Gondreville as if it were your own,” he said to the Messieurs de Simeuse, “ and you are keeping alive a deadly hatred. I see, by the surprise upon your faces, that you are quite unaware of the ill-will against you at Troyes, where your late brave conduct is remembered. They tell of how you foiled the police of the Empire ; some praise you for it, but others regard you as enemies of the Emperor ; partisans declare that Napoleon's clemency is inexplicable. That, however, is nothing. The real danger lies here ; you foiled men who thought themselves cleverer than you ; and low-bred men never forgive. Sooner or later justice, which in your department emanates from your enemy, Senator Malin (who has his henchmen everywhere, even in the ministerial offices), — *his* justice will rejoice to see you involved in some annoying scrape. A peasant, for instance, will quarrel with you for riding over his field ; your guns are in your hands, you are hot-tempered, and something happens. In your position it is absolutely essential that you should not put yourselves in the wrong. I do not speak to you thus without good reason. The police keep this arrondissement under strict surveillance ; they have an agent in that little hole of Arcis expressly to protect the Imperial senator Malin against your attacks. He is afraid of you, and says so openly.”

“ It is a calumny ! ” cried the younger Simeuse.

“A calumny, — I am sure of it myself, but will the public believe it? Michu certainly did aim at the senator, who does not forget the danger he was in; and since your return the countess has taken Michu into her service. To many persons, in fact to the majority, Malin will seem in the right. You do not understand how delicate the position of an *émigré* is towards those who are now in possession of his property. The prefect, a very intelligent man, dropped a word to me yesterday about you which has made me uneasy. In short, I sincerely wish you would not remain here.”

This speech was received in dumb amazement. Marie-Paul rang the bell.

“Gothard,” he said, to the little page, “send Michu here.”

“Michu, my friend,” said the Marquis de Simeuse when the man appeared, “is it true that you intended to kill Malin?”

“Yes, Monsieur le marquis; and when he comes here again I shall lie in wait for him.”

“Do you know that we are suspected of instigating it, and that our cousin, by taking you as her farmer is supposed to be furthering your scheme?”

“Good God!” cried Michu, “am I accursed? Shall I never be able to rid you of that villain?”

“No, my man, no!” said Paul-Marie. “But we will always take care of you, though you will have to

leave our service and the country too. Sell your property here; we will send you to Trieste to a friend of ours who has immense business connections, and he'll employ you until things are better in this country for all of us."

Tears came into Michu's eyes; he stood rooted to the floor.

"Were there any witnesses when you aimed at Malin?" asked the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Grévin the notary was talking with him, and that prevented my killing him — very fortunately, as Madame la Comtesse knows," said Michu, looking at his mistress.

"Grévin is not the only one who knows it?" said Monsieur de Chargebœuf, who seemed annoyed at what was said, though none but the family were present.

"That police-spy who came here to trap my masters, he knew it too," said Michu.

Monsieur de Chargebœuf rose as if to look at the gardens, and said, "You have made the most of Cinq-Cygne." Then he left the house, followed by the two brothers and Laurence, who now saw the meaning of his visit.

"You are frank and generous, but most imprudent," said the old man. "It was natural enough that I should warn you of a rumor which was certain to be a slander; but what have you done now? you



have let such weak persons as Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and their sons see that there was truth in it. Oh, young men! young men! You ought to keep Michu here and go away yourselves. But if you persist in remaining, at least write a letter to the senator and tell him that having heard the rumors about Michu you have dismissed him from your employ."

"We!" exclaimed the brothers; "what, write to Malin, — to the murderer of our father and our mother, to the insolent plunderer of our property!"

"All true; but he is one of the chief personages at the Imperial court, and the king of your department."

"He, who voted for the death of Louis XVI. in case the army of Condé entered France!" cried Laurence.

"He, who probably advised the murder of the Duc d'Enghien!" exclaimed Paul-Marie.

"Well, well, if you want to recapitulate his titles of nobility," cried Monsieur de Chargebœuf, "say he who pulled Robespierre by the skirts of his coat to make him fall when he saw that his enemies were stronger than he; he who would have shot Bonaparte if the 18th Brumaire had missed fire; he who manoeuvres now to bring back the Bourbons if Napoleon totters; he whom the strong will ever find on their side to handle either sword or pistol and put an end to an adversary whom they fear! But — all that is only reason the more for what I urge upon you,"

“We have fallen very low,” said Laurence.

“Children,” said the old marquis, taking them by the hand and going to the lawn, then covered by a slight fall of snow; “you will be angry at the prudent advice of an old man, but I am bound to give it, and here it is: If I were you I would employ as go-between some trustworthy old fellow — like myself, for instance; I would commission him to ask Malin for a million of francs for the title-deeds of Gondreville; he would gladly consent if the matter were kept secret. You will then have capital in hand, an income of a hundred thousand francs, and you can buy some fine estate in another part of France. As for Cinq-Cygne, it can safely be left to the management of Monsieur d’Hauteserre, and you can draw lots as to which of you shall win the hand of this dear heiress — But ah! I know the words of an old man in the ears of the young are like the words of the young in the ears of the old, a sound without meaning.”

The old marquis signed to his three relatives that he wished no answer, and returned to the salon, where, during their absence, the abbé and his sister had arrived.

The proposal to draw lots for their cousin’s hand had offended the brothers, while Laurence revolted in her soul at the bitterness of the remedy the old marquis counselled. All three were now less gracious to him, though they did not cease to be polite. The warmth of

their feeling was chilled. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, who felt the change, cast frequent looks of kindly compassion on these charming young people. The conversation became general, but the old marquis still dwelt on the necessity of submitting to events, and he applauded Monsieur d'Hauteserre for his persistence in urging his sons to take service under the Empire.

“Bonaparte,” he said, “makes dukes. He has created Imperial fiefs, he will therefore make counts. Malin is determined to be Comte de Gondreville. That is a fancy,” he added, looking at the Simeuse brothers, “which might be profitable to you —”

“Or fatal,” said Laurence.

As soon as the horses were put to the marquis took leave, accompanied to the door by the whole party. When fairly in the carriage he made a sign to Laurence to come and speak to him, and she sprang upon the foot-board with the lightness of a swallow.

“You are not an ordinary woman, and you ought to understand me,” he said in her ear. “Malin’s conscience will never allow him to leave you in peace; he will set some trap to injure you. I implore you to be careful of all your actions, even the most unimportant. Compromise, negotiate; those are my last words.”

The brothers stood motionless beside their cousin and watched the *berlingot* as it turned through the iron gates and took the road to Troyes. Laurence repeated

the old man's last words. But sage experience should not present itself to the eyes of youth in a *berlingot*, colored stockings, and a queue. These ardent young hearts had no conception of the change that had passed over France; indignation crisped their nerves, honor boiled with their noble blood through every vein.

"He, the head of the house of Chargebœuf!" said the Marquis de Simeuse. "A man who bears the motto *Adsit fortior*, the noblest of warcries!"

"We are no longer in the days of Saint-Louis," said the younger Simeuse.

"But 'We die singing,'" said the countess. "The cry of the five young girls of my house is mine!"

"And ours, '*Cy meurs*,'" said the elder Simeuse. "Therefore, no quarter, I say; for, on reflection, we shall find that our relative had pondered well what he told us — Gondreville to be the title of a Malin!"

"And his seat!" said the younger.

"Mansart designed it for noble stock, and the populace will get their children in it!" exclaimed the elder.

"If that were to come to pass, I'd rather see Gondreville in ashes!" cried Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

One of the villagers, who had entered the grounds to examine a calf Monsieur d'Hauteserre was trying to sell to him, overheard these last words as he came from the cow-sheds.

"Let us go in," said Laurence, laughing; "this is

very imprudent ; we are giving the old marquis a right to blame us. My poor Michu," she added, as she entered the salon, "I had forgotten your adventure ; as we are not in the odor of sanctity in these parts you must be careful not to compromise us in future. Have you any other peccadillos on your conscience?"

"I blame myself for not having killed the murderer of my old masters before I came to the rescue of my present ones —"

"Michu!" said the abbé in a warning tone.

"But I'll not leave the country," Michu continued, paying no heed to the abbé's exclamation, "till I am certain you are safe. I see fellows roaming about here whom I distrust. The last time we hunted in the forest, that keeper who took my place at Gondreville came to me and asked if we supposed we were on our own property. 'Ho! my lad,' I said, 'we can't get rid in two weeks of ideas we've had for centuries.'"

"You did wrong, Michu," said the Marquis de Simeuse, smiling with satisfaction.

"What answer did he make?" asked Monsieur d'Hauteserre.

"He said he would inform the senator of our claims," replied Michu.

"Comte de Gondreville!" repeated the elder Simeuse ; "what a masquerade ! But after all, they say 'your Majesty' to Bonaparte !"

“And to the Grand Duc de Berg, ‘your Highness!’” said the abbé.

“Who is he?” asked the Marquis de Simeuse.

“Murat, Napoleon’s brother-in-law,” replied old d’Hauteserre.

“Delightful!” remarked Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. “Do they also say ‘your Majesty’ to the widow of Beauharnais?”

“Yes, mademoiselle,” said the abbé.

“We ought to go to Paris and see it all,” cried Laurence.

“Alas, mademoiselle,” said Michu, “I was there to put François at school, and I swear to you there’s no joking with what they call the Imperial Guard. If the rest of the army are like them, the thing may last longer than we.”

“They say many of the noble families are taking service,” said Monsieur d’Hauteserre.

“According to the present law,” added the abbé, “you will be compelled to serve. The conscription makes no distinction of ranks or names.”

“That man is doing us more harm with his court than the Revolution did with its axe!” cried Laurence.

“The Church prays for him,” said the abbé.

These remarks, made rapidly one after another, were so many commentaries on the wise counsel of the old Marquis de Chargeboeuf; but the young people had

too much faith, too much honor, to dream of resorting to a compromise. They told themselves, as all vanquished parties in all times have declared, that the luck of the conquerors would soon be at an end, that the Emperor had no support but that of the army, that the power *de facto* must sooner or later give way to the Divine Right, etc. So, in spite of the wise counsel given to them, they fell into the pitfall, which others, like old d'Hauteserre, more prudent and more amenable to reason, would have been able to avoid. If men were frank they might perhaps admit that misfortunes never overtake them until after they have received either an actual or an occult warning. Many do not perceive the deep meaning of such visible or invisible signs until after the disaster is upon them.

“In any case, Madame la comtesse knows that I cannot leave the country until I have given up a certain trust,” said Michu in a low voice to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

For all answer she made him a sign of acquiescence, and he left the room.

## XII.

## THE FACTS OF A MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR.

MICHU sold his farm at once to Beauvisage, a farmer at Bellache, but he was not to receive the money for twenty days. A month after the Marquis de Chargebœuf's visit, Laurence, who had told her cousins of their buried fortune, proposed to them to take the day of the Mi-carême to disinter it. The unusual quantity of snow which fell that winter had hitherto prevented Michu from obtaining the treasure, and it now gave him pleasure to undertake the operation with his masters. He was determined to leave the neighborhood as soon as it was over, for he feared himself.

"Malin has suddenly arrived at Gondreville, and no one knows why," he said to his mistress. "I shall never be able to resist putting the property into the market by the death of its owner. I feel I am guilty in not following my inspirations."

"Why should he leave Paris at this season?" said the countess.

"All Arcis is talking about it," replied Michu; "he has left his family in Paris, and no one is with him but his valet. Monsieur Grévin, the notary of Arcis, Ma-



dame Marion, the wife of the receiver-general, and her sister-in-law are staying at Gondreville."

Laurence had chosen the mid-lent day for their purpose because it enabled her to give her servants a holiday and so get them out of the way. The usual masquerade drew the peasantry to the town and no one was at work in the fields. Chance made its calculations with as much cleverness as Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne made hers. The uneasiness of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre at the idea of keeping eleven hundred thousand francs in gold in a lonely château on the borders of a forest was likely to be so great that their sons advised they should know nothing about it. The secret of the expedition was therefore confined to Gothard, Michu, Laurence, and the four gentlemen.

After much consultation it seemed possible to put forty-eight thousand francs in a long sack on the crupper of each of their horses. Three trips would therefore bring the whole. It was agreed to send all the servants, whose curiosity might be troublesome, to Troyes to see the shows. Catherine, Marthe, and Durieu, who could be relied on, stayed at home in charge of the house. The other servants were glad of their holiday and started by daybreak. Gothard, assisted by Michu, saddled the horses as soon as they were gone, and the party started by way of the gardens to reach the forest. Just as they were mounting—for

the park gate was so low on the garden side that they led their horses until they were through it — old Beauvisage, the farmer at Bellache, happened to pass.

“There!” cried Gothard, “I hear some one.”

“Oh, it is only I,” said the worthy man, coming toward them. “Your servant, gentlemen; are you off hunting, in spite of the new decrees? I don’t complain of you; but do take care! though you have friends you have also enemies.”

“Oh, as for that,” said the elder d’Hauteserre, smiling, “God grant that our hunt may be lucky to-day, — if so, you will get your masters back again.”

These words, to which events were destined to give a totally different meaning, earned a severe look from Laurence. The elder Simeuse was confident that Malin would restore Gondreville for an indemnity. These rash youths were determined to do exactly the contrary of what the Marquis de Chargebœuf had advised. Robert, who shared these hopes, was thinking of them when he gave utterance to the fatal words.

“Not a word of this, old friend,” said Michu to Beauvisage, waiting behind the others to lock the gate.

It was one of those fine mornings in March when the air is dry, the earth pure, the sky clear, and the atmosphere a contradiction to the leafless trees; the season was so mild that the eye caught glimpses here and there of verdure

“We are seeking treasure when all the while you are the real treasure of our house, cousin,” said the elder Simeuse, gayly.

Laurence was in front, with a cousin on each side of her. The d’Hauteserres were behind, followed by Michu. Gothard had gone forward to clear the way.

“Now that our fortune is restored, you must marry my brother,” said the younger in a low voice. “He adores you; together you will be as rich as nobles ought to be in these days.”

“No, give the whole fortune to him and I will marry you,” said Laurence; “I am rich enough for two.”

“So be it,” cried the Marquis; “I will leave you, and find a wife worthy to be your sister.”

“So you really love me less than I thought you did?” said Laurence looking at him with a sort of jealousy.

“No; I love you both better than either of you love me,” replied the marquis.

“And therefore you would sacrifice yourself?” asked Laurence with a glance full of momentary preference.

The marquis was silent.

“Well, then, I shall think only of you, and that will be intolerable to my husband,” exclaimed Laurence, impatient at his silence.

“How could I live without you?” said the younger twin to his brother.

“But, after all, you can’t marry us both,” said the marquis, replying to Laurence; “and the time has come,” he continued, in the brusque tone of a man who is struck to the heart, “to make your decision.”

He urged his horse in advance so that the d’Hautesserres might not overhear them. His brother’s horse and Laurence’s followed him. When they had put some distance between themselves and the rest of the party Laurence attempted to speak, but tears were at first her only language.

“I will enter a cloister,” she said at last.

“And let the race of Cinq-Cygne end?” said the younger brother. “Instead of one unhappy man, would you make two? No, whichever of us must be your brother only, will resign himself to that fate. It is the knowledge that we are no longer poor that has brought us to explain ourselves,” he added, glancing at the marquis. “If I am the one preferred, all this money is my brother’s. If I am rejected, he will give it to me with the title of de Simeuse, for he must then take the name and title of Cinq Cygne. Whichever way it ends, the loser will have a chance of recovery — but if he feels he must die of grief, he can enter the army and die in battle, not to sadden the happy household.”

“We are true knights of the olden time, worthy of our fathers,” cried the elder. “Speak, Laurence; decide between us.”

“We cannot continue as we are,” said the younger.

“Do not think, Laurence, that self-denial is without its joys,” said the elder.

“My dear loved ones,” said the girl, “I am unable to decide. I love you both as though you were one being — as your mother loved you. God will help us. I cannot choose. Let us put it to chance — but I make one condition.”

“What is it?”

“Whichever one of you becomes my brother must stay with me until I suffer him to leave me. I wish to be sole judge of when to part.”

“Yes, yes,” said the brothers, without explaining to themselves her meaning.

“The first of you to whom Madame d’Hauteserre speaks to-night at table after the Benedicite, shall be my husband. But neither of you must practise fraud or induce her to answer a question.”

“We will play fair,” said the younger, smiling.

Each kissed her hand. The certainty of some decision which both could fancy favorable made them gay.

“Either way, dear Laurence, you create a Comte de Cinq-Cygne —”

“I believe,” thought Michu, riding behind them, “that mademoiselle will not long be unmarried. How gay my masters are! If my mistress makes her choice I shall not leave; I must stay and see that wedding.”

Just then a magpie flew suddenly before his face. Michu, superstitious like all primitive beings, fancied he heard the muffled tones of a death-knell. The day, however, began brightly enough for lovers, who rarely see magpies when together in the woods. Michu, armed with his plan, verified the spots; each gentleman had brought a pickaxe, and the money was soon found. The part of the forest where it was buried was quite wild, far from all paths or habitations, so that the cavalcade bearing the gold returned unseen. This proved to be a great misfortune. On their way from Cinq-Cygne to fetch the last two hundred thousand francs, the party, emboldened by success, took a more direct way than on their other trips. The path passed an opening from which the park of Gondreville could be seen.

“What is that?” cried Laurence, pointing to a column of blue flame.

“A bonfire, I think,” replied Michu.

Laurence, who knew all the by-ways of the forest, left the rest of the party and galloped towards the pavilion, Michu’s old home. Though the building was closed and deserted, the iron gates were open, and traces of the recent passage of several horses struck Laurence instantly. The column of blue smoke was rising from a field in what was called the English park, where, as she supposed, they were burning brush.

“ Ah ! so you are concerned in it, too, are you, made-moiselle ? ” cried Violette, who came out of the park at top speed on his pony, and pulled up to meet Laurence. “ But, of course, it is only a carnival joke ? They surely won’t kill him ? ”

“ Who ? ”

“ Your cousins would n’t put him to death ? ”

“ Death ! whose death ? ”

“ The senator’s. ”

“ You are crazy, Violette ! ”

“ Well, what are you doing here, then ? ” he demanded.

At the idea of a danger which was threatening her cousins, Laurence turned her horse and galloped back to them, reaching the ground as the last sacks were filled.

“ Quick, quick ! ” she cried. “ I don’t know what is going on, but let us get back to Cinq-Cygne. ”

While the happy party were employed in recovering the fortune saved by the old marquis, and guarded for so many years by Michu, an extraordinary scene was taking place in the château of Gondreville.

About two o’clock in the afternoon Malin and his friend Grévin were playing chess before the fire in the great salon on the ground-floor. Madame Grévin and Madame Marion were sitting on a sofa and talking together at a corner of the fireplace. All the servants had gone

to see the masquerade, which had long been announced in the arrondissement. The family of the bailiff who had replaced Michu had gone too. The senator's valet and Violette were the only persons beside the family at the château. The porter, two gardeners, and their wives were on the place, but their lodge was at the entrance of the courtyards at the farther end of the avenue to Arcis, and the distance from there to the château is beyond the sound of a pistol-shot. Violette was waiting in the antechamber until the senator and Grévin could see him on business, to arrange a matter relating to his lease. At that moment five men, masked and gloved, who in height, manner, and bearing strongly resembled the Simeuse and d'Hauteserre brothers and Michu, rushed into the antechamber, seized and gagged the valet and Violette, and fastened them to their chairs in a side room. In spite of the rapidity with which this was done, Violette and the servant had time to utter one cry. It was heard in the salon. The two ladies thought it a cry of fear.

"Listen!" said Madame Grévin, "can there be robbers?"

"No, nonsense!" said Grévin, "only carnival cries; the masqueraders must be coming to pay us a visit."

This discussion gave time for the four strangers to close the doors towards the courtyards and to lock up Violette and the valet. Madame Grévin, who was



rather obstinate, insisted on knowing what the noise meant. She rose, left the room, and came face to face with the five masked men, who treated her as they had treated the farmer and the valet. Then they rushed into the salon, where the two strongest seized and gagged Malin, and carried him off into the park, while the three others remained behind to gag Madame Marion and Grévin and lash them to their armchairs. The whole affair did not take more than half an hour. The three unknown men, who were quickly rejoined by the two who had carried off the senator, then proceeded to ransack the château from cellar to garret. They opened all closets and doors, and sounded the walls; until five o'clock they were absolute masters of the place. By that time the valet had managed to loosen with his teeth the rope that bound Violette. Violette, able then to get the gag from his mouth, began to shout for help. Hearing the shouts the five men withdrew to the gardens, where they mounted horses closely resembling those at Cinq-Cygne, and rode away, but not so rapidly that Violette was unable to catch sight of them. After releasing the valet, the two ladies, and the notary, Violette mounted his pony and rode after help. When he reached the pavilion he was amazed to see the gates open and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne apparently on the watch.

Directly after the young countess had ridden off, Vio-

lette was overtaken by Grévin and the forester of the township of Gondreville, who had taken horses from the stables at the château. The porter's wife was on her way to summon the gendarmerie from Arcis. Violette at once informed Grévin of his meeting with Laurence and the sudden flight of the daring girl, whose strong and decided character was known to all of them.

"She was keeping watch," said Violette.

"Is it possible that those Cinq-Cygne people have done this thing?" cried Grévin.

"Do you mean to say you did n't recognize that stout Michu?" exclaimed Violette. "It was he who attacked me; I knew his fist. Besides, they rode the Cinq-Cygne horses."

Noticing the hoof-marks on the sand of the *rond-point* and along the park road the notary stationed the forester at the gateway to see to the preservation of these precious traces until the justice of peace of Arcis (for whom he now sent Violette) could take note of them. He himself returned hastily to the château, where the lieutenant and sub-lieutenant of the Imperial gendarmerie at Arcis had arrived, accompanied by four men and a corporal. The lieutenant was the same man whose head François Michu had broken two years earlier, and who had heard from Corentin the name of his mischievous assailant. This man, whose name was Giguet (his brother was in the army, and became

one of the finest colonels of artillery), was an extremely able officer of gendarmerie. Later he commanded the squadron of the Aube. The sub-lieutenant, named Welff, had formerly driven Corentin from Cinq-Cygne to the pavilion, and from the pavilion to Troyes. On the way, the spy had fully informed him as to what he called the trickery of Laurence and Michu. The two officers were therefore well inclined to show, and did show, great eagerness against the family at Cinq-Cygne.

## XIII.

## THE CODE OF BRUMAIRE, YEAR IV.

MALIN and Grévin had both, the latter working for the former, taken part in the construction of the Code called that of Brumaire, year IV., the judicial work of the National Convention, so-called, and promulgated by the Directory. Grévin knew its provisions thoroughly, and was able to apply them in this affair with terrible celerity, under a theory, now converted into a certainty, of the guilt of Michu and the Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre. No one in these days, unless it be some antiquated magistrates, will remember this system of justice, which Napoleon was even then overthrowing by the promulgation of his own Codes, and by the institution of his magistracy under the form in which it now rules France.

The Code of Brumaire, year IV., gave to the director of the jury of the department the duty of discovering, indicting, and prosecuting the persons guilty of the delinquency committed at Gondreville. Remark, by the way, that the Convention had eliminated from its judicial vocabulary the word "crime;" *delinquencies* and *misdeemeanors* were alone admitted; and these were pun-

ished with fines, imprisonment, and penalties "afflictive or infamous." Death was an afflictive punishment. But the penalty of death was to be done away with after the restoration of peace, and twenty-four years of hard labor were to take its place. Thus the Convention estimated twenty-four years of hard labor as the equivalent of death. What therefore can be said for a code which inflicts the punishment of hard labor for life? The system then in process of preparation by the Napoleonic Council of State suppressed the function of the directors of juries, which united many enormous powers. In relation to the discovery of delinquencies and their prosecution the director of the jury was, in fact, agent of police, public prosecutor, municipal judge, and the court itself. His proceedings and his indictments were, however, submitted for signature to a commissioner of the executive power and to the verdict of eight jurymen, before whom he laid the facts of the case, and who examined the witnesses and the accused and rendered the preliminary verdict, called the indictment. The director was, however, in a position to exercise such influence over the jurymen, who met in his private office, that they could not well avoid agreeing with him. These jurymen were called the jury of indictment. There were others who formed the juries of the criminal tribunals whose duty it was to judge the accused; these were called, in contradistinc-

tion to the jury of indictment, the judgment jury. The criminal tribunal, to which Napoleon afterwards gave the name of criminal court, was composed of one President or chief justice, four judges, the public prosecutor, and a government commissioner.

Nevertheless, from 1799 to 1806 there were special courts (so-called) which judged without juries certain misdemeanors in certain departments; these were composed of judges taken from the civil courts and formed into a special court. This conflict of special justice and criminal justice gave rise to questions of competence which came before the courts of appeal. If the department of the Aube had had a special court, the verdict on the outrage committed on a senator of the Empire would no doubt have been referred to it; but this tranquil department had never needed unusual jurisdiction. Grévin therefore despatched the sub-lieutenant to Troyes to bring the director of the jury of that town. The emissary went at full gallop, and soon returned in a post-carriage with the all-powerful magistrate.

The director of the Troyes jury was formerly secretary of one of the committees of the Convention, a friend of Malin, to whom he owed his present place. This magistrate, named Lechesneau, had helped Malin, as Grévin had done, in his work on the Code during the Convention. Malin in return recommended him to

Cambacérès, who appointed him attorney-general for Italy. Unfortunately for him, Lechesneau had a liaison with a great lady in Turin, and Napoleon removed him to avoid a criminal trial threatened by the husband. Lechesneau, bound in gratitude to Malin, felt the importance of this attack upon his patron, and brought with him a captain of gendarmerie and twelve men.

Before starting he laid his plans with the prefect, who was unable at that late hour, it being after dark, to use the telegraph. They therefore sent a mounted messenger to Paris to notify the minister of police, the chief justice and the Emperor of this extraordinary crime. In the salon of Gondreville, Lechesneau found Mesdames Marion and Grévin, Violette, the senator's valet, and the justice of peace with his clerk. The château had already been examined; the justice, assisted by Grévin, had carefully collected the first testimony. The first thing that struck him was the obvious intention shown in the choice of the day and hour for the attack. The hour prevented an immediate search for proofs and traces. At this season it was nearly dark by half-past five, the hour at which Violette gave the alarm, and darkness often means impunity to evil-doers. The choice of a holiday, when most persons had gone to the masquerade at Arcis, and the senator was comparatively alone in the house, showed an obvious intention to get rid of witnesses.

“Let us do justice to the intelligence of the prefecture of police,” said Lechesneau; “they have never ceased to warn us to be on our guard against the nobles at Cinq-Cygne; they have always declared that sooner or later those people would play us some dangerous trick.”

Sure of the active co-operation of the prefect of the Aube, who sent messengers to all the surrounding prefectures asking them to search for the five abductors and the senator, Lechesneau began his work by verifying the first facts. This was soon done by the help of two such legal heads as those of Grévin and the justice of peace. The latter, named Pigoult, formerly head-clerk in the office where Malin and Grévin had first studied law in Paris, was soon after appointed judge of the municipal court at Arcis. In relation to Michu, Lechesneau knew of the threats the man had made about the sale of Gondreville to Marion, and the danger Malin had escaped in his own park from Michu's gun. These two facts, one being the consequence of the other, were no doubt the precursors of the present successful attack, and they pointed so obviously to the late bailiff as the instigator of the outrage that Grévin, his wife, Violette, and Madame Marion declared that they had recognized among the five masked men one who exactly resembled Michu. The color of the hair and whiskers and the thick-set figure of the man made



the mask he wore useless. Besides, who but Michu could have opened the iron gates of the park with a key? The present bailiff and his wife, now returned from the masquerade, deposed to having locked both gates before leaving the pavilion. The gates when examined showed no sign of being forced.

“When we turned him off he must have taken some duplicate keys with him,” remarked Grévin. “No doubt he has been meditating a desperate step, for he has lately sold his whole property, and he received the money for it in my office day before yesterday.”

“The others have followed his lead!” exclaimed Lechesneau, struck with the circumstance. “He has been their evil genius.”

Moreover, who could know as well as the Messieurs de Simeuse the inns and outs of the château. None of the assailants seemed to have blundered in their search; they had gone through the house in a confident way which showed that they knew what they wanted and where to find it. The locks of none of the opened closets had been forced; therefore the delinquents had keys. Strange to say, however, nothing had been taken; the motive, therefore, was not robbery. More than all, when Violette had followed the tracks of the horses as far as the *rond-point*, he had found the countess, evidently on guard, at the pavilion. From such a combination of facts and depositions arose a presumption as

to the guilt of the Messieurs de Simeuse, d'Hauteserre, and Michu, which would have been strong to unprejudiced minds, and to the director of the jury had the force of certainty. What were they likely to do to the future Comte de Gondreville? Did they mean to force him to make over the estate for which Michu declared in 1799 he had the money to pay?

But there was another aspect of the case to the knowing criminal lawyer. He asked himself what could be the object of the careful search made of the château. If revenge were at the bottom of the matter, the assailants would have killed the senator. Perhaps he had been killed and buried. The abduction, however, seemed to point to imprisonment. But why keep their victim imprisoned after searching the castle? It was folly to suppose that the abduction of a dignitary of the Empire could long remain secret. The publicity of the matter would prevent any benefit from it.

To these suggestions Pigoult replied that justice was never able to make out all the motives of scoundrels. In every criminal case there were obscurities, he said, between the judge and the guilty person; conscience had depths into which no human mind could enter unless by the confession of the criminal.

Grévin and Lechesneau nodded their assent, without, however, relaxing their determination to see to the bottom of the present mystery.

“The Emperor pardoned those young men,” said Pigoult to Grévin. “He removed their names from the list of *émigrés*, though they certainly took part in that last conspiracy against him.”

Lechesneau made no delay in sending his whole force of gendarmerie to the forest and to the valley of Cinq-Cygne; telling Giguët to take with him the justice of peace, who, according to the terms of the Code, would then become an auxiliary police-officer. He ordered them to make all preliminary inquiries in the township of Cinq-Cygne, and to take testimony if necessary; and to save time, he dictated and signed a warrant for the arrest of Michu, against whom the charge was evident on the positive testimony of Violette. After the departure of the gendarmes Lechesneau returned to the important question of issuing warrants for the arrest of the Simeuse and d’Hauteserre brothers. According to the Code these warrants would have to contain the charges against the delinquents.

Giguët and the justice of peace rode so rapidly to Cinq-Cygne that they met Laurence’s servants returning from the festivities at Troyes. Stopped, and taken before the mayor where they were interrogated, they all stated, being ignorant of the importance of the answer, that their mistress had given them permission to spend the whole day at Troyes. To a question put by the justice of the peace, each replied that Mademoiselle

had offered them the amusement which they had not thought of asking for. This testimony seemed so important to the justice of the peace that he sent back a messenger to Gondreville to advise Lechesneau to proceed himself to Cinq-Cygne and arrest the four gentlemen, while he went to Michu's farm, so that the five arrests might be made simultaneously.

This new element was so convincing that Lechesneau started at once for Cinq-Cygne. He knew well what pleasure would be felt in Troyes at such proceedings against the old nobles, the enemies of the people, now become the enemies of the Emperor. In such circumstances a magistrate is very apt to take mere presumptive evidence for actual proof. Nevertheless, on his way from Gondreville to Cinq-Cygne, in the senator's own carriage, it did occur to Lechesneau (who would certainly have made a fine magistrate had it not been for his love-affair, and the Emperor's sudden morality to which he owed his disgrace) to think the audacity of the young men and Michu a piece of folly which was not in keeping with what he knew of the judgment and character of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. He imagined in his own mind some other motives for the deed than the restitution of Gondreville. In all things, even in the magistracy, there is what may be called the conscience of a calling. Lechesneau's perplexities came from this conscience, which all men

put into the proper performance of the duties they like — scientific men into science, artists into art, judges into the rendering of justice. Perhaps for this reason judges are really greater safeguards for persons accused of wrong-doing than are juries. A magistrate relies only on reason and its laws; juries are floated to and fro by the waves of sentiment. The director of the jury accordingly set several questions before his mind, resolving to find in their solution satisfactory reasons for making the arrests.

Though the news of the abduction was already agitating the town of Troyes, it was still unknown at Arcis, where the inhabitants were supping when the messenger arrived to summon the gendarmes. No one, of course, knew it in the village of Cinq-Cygne, the valley and the château of which were now, for the second time, encircled by gendarmes.

Laurence had only to tell Marthe, Catherine, and the Durieus not to leave the château, to be strictly obeyed. After each trip to fetch the gold, the horses were fastened in the covered way opposite to the breach in the moat, and from there Robert and Michu, the strongest of the party, carried the sacks through the breach to a cellar under the staircase in the tower called *Mademoiselle's*. Reaching the château with the last load about half-past five o'clock, the four gentlemen and Michu proceeded to bury the treasure in the floor of the cellar

and then to wall up the entrance. Michu took charge of the matter with Gothard to help him; the lad was sent to the farm for some sacks of plaster left over when the new buildings were put up, and Marthe went with him to show him where they were. Michu, very hungry, made such haste that by half-past seven o'clock the work was done; and he started for home at a quick pace to stop Gothard, who had been sent for another sack of plaster which he thought he might want. The farm was already watched by the forester of Cinq-Cygne, the justice of peace, his clerk and four gendarmes who, however, kept out of sight and allowed him to enter the house without seeing them.

Michu saw Gothard with the sack on his shoulder and called to him from a distance: "It is all finished, my lad; take that back and stay and dine with us."

Michu, his face perspiring, his clothes soiled with plaster and covered with fragments of muddy stone from the breach, reached home joyfully and entered the kitchen where Marthe and her mother were serving the soup in expectation of his coming.

Just as Michu was turning the faucet of the water-pipe intending to wash his hands, the justice of peace entered the house accompanied by his clerk and the forester.

"What have you come for, Monsieur Pigoult?" asked Michu.

“In the name of the Emperor and the laws, I arrest you,” replied the justice.

The three gendarmes entered the kitchen leading Gothard. Seeing the silver lace on their hats Marthe and her mother looked at each other in terror.

“Pooh! why?” asked Michu, who sat down at the table and called to his wife, “Give me something to eat; I’m famished.”

“You know why as well as we do,” said the justice, making a sign to his clerk to begin the *procès-verbal* and exhibiting the warrant of arrest.

“Well, well, Gothard, you need n’t stare so,” said Michu. “Do you want some dinner, yes or no? Let them write down their nonsense.”

“You admit, of course, the condition of your clothes?” said the justice of peace; “and you can’t deny the words you said just now to Gothard?”

Michu, supplied with food by his wife, who was amazed at his coolness, was eating with the avidity of a hungry man. He made no answer to the justice, for his mouth was full and his heart innocent. Gothard’s appetite was destroyed by fear.

“Look here,” said the forester, going up to Michu and whispering in his ear: “What have you done with the senator? You had better make a clean breast of it, for if we are to believe these people it is a matter of life or death to you.”

“Good God!” cried Marthe, who overheard the last words and fell into a chair as if annihilated.

“Violette must have played us some infamous trick,” cried Michu, recollecting what Laurence had said in the forest.

“Ha! so you do know that Violette saw you?” said justice of peace.

Michu bit his lips and resolved to say no more. Gothard imitated him. Seeing the uselessness of all attempts to make them talk, and knowing what the neighborhood chose to call Michu’s perversity, the justice ordered the gendarmes to bind his hands and those of Gothard and take them both to the château, whither he now went himself to rejoin the director of the jury.



## XIV.

## THE ARRESTS.

THE four young men and Laurence were so hungry and the dinner so acceptable that they would not delay it by changing their dress. They entered the salon, she in her riding-habit, they in their white leather breeches, high-top boots and green-cloth jackets, where they found Monsieur d'Hauteserre and his-wife, not a little uneasy at their long absence. The goodman had noticed their goings and comings, and, above all, their evident distrust of him, for Laurence had been unable to get rid of him as she had of her servants. Once, when his own sons evidently avoided making any reply to his questions, he went to his wife and said, "I am afraid that Laurence may still get us into trouble!"

"What sort of game did you hunt to-day?" said Madame d'Hauteserre to Laurence.

"Ah!" replied the young girl, laughing, "you'll hear some day what a strange hunt your sons have joined in to-day.

Though said in jest the words made the old lady tremble. Catherine entered to announce dinner. Lau-

rence took Monsieur d'Hauteserre's arm, smiling for a moment at the necessity she thus forced upon her cousins to offer an arm to Madame d'Hauteserre, who, according to agreement, was now to be the arbiter of their fate.

The Marquis de Simeuse took in Madame d'Hauteserre. The situation was so momentous that after the Benedicite was said Laurence and the young men trembled from the violent palpitation of their hearts. Madame d'Hauteserre, who carved, was struck by the anxiety on the faces of the Simeuse brothers and the great alteration that was noticeable in Laurence's lamb-like features."

"Something extraordinary is going on, I am sure of it!" she exclaimed, looking at all of them.

"To whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"To all of you," said the old lady.

"As for me, mother," said Robert, "I am frightfully hungry, and that is not extraordinary."

Madame d'Hauteserre, still troubled, offered the Marquis de Simeuse a plate intended for his brother.

"I am like your mother," she said. "I don't know you apart even by your cravats. I thought I was helping your brother."

"You have helped me better than you thought for," said the youngest, turning pale; "you have made him Comte de Cinq-Cygne."

“What! do you mean to tell me the countess has made her choice?” cried Madame d’Hauteserre.

“No,” said Laurence; “we left the decision to fate and you are its instrument.”

She told of the agreement made that morning. The elder Simeuse, watching the increasing pallor of his brother’s face, was momentarily on the point of crying out, “Marry her; I will go away and die!” Just then, as the dessert was being served, all present heard raps upon the window of the dining-room on the garden side. The eldest d’Hauteserre opened it and gave entrance to the abbé, whose breeches were torn in climbing over the walls of the park.

“Fly! they are coming to arrest you,” he cried.

“Why?”

“I don’t know yet; but there’s a warrant against you.”

The words were greeted with general laughter.

“We are innocent,” said the young men.

“Innocent or guilty,” said the abbé, “mount your horses and make for the frontier. There you can prove your innocence. You could overcome a sentence by default; you will never overcome a sentence rendered by popular passion and instigated by prejudice. Remember the words of President de Harlay, ‘If I were accused of carrying off the towers of Notre-Dame the first thing I should do would be to run away.’”

"To run away would be to admit we were guilty," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Don't do it!" cried Laurence.

"Always the same sublime folly!" exclaimed the abbé, in despair. "If I had the power of God I would carry you away. But if I am found here in this state they will turn my visit against you, and against me too; therefore I leave you by the way I came. Consider my advice; you have still time. The gendarmes have not yet thought of the wall which adjoins the parsonage; but you are hemmed in on the other sides."

The sound of many feet and the jangle of the sabres of the gendarmerie echoed through the courtyard and reached the dining-room a few moments after the departure of the poor abbé, whose advice had met the same fate as that of the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Our twin existence," said the younger Simeuse, speaking to Laurence, "is an anomaly — our love for you is anomalous; it is that very quality which has won your heart. Possibly, the reason why all twins known to us in history have been unfortunate is that the laws of nature are subverted in them. In our case, see how persistently an evil fate pursues us! your decision is now postponed."

Laurence was stupefied; the fatal words of the director of the jury hummed in her ears: — "In the name of the Emperor and the laws, I arrest the Sieurs

Paul-Marie and Marie-Paul Simeuse, Adrien and Robert d'Hauteserre — These gentlemen," he added, addressing the men who accompanied him and pointing to the mud on the clothing of the prisoners, "cannot deny that they have spent the greater part of this day on horseback."

"Of what are they accused?" asked Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, haughtily.

"Don't you mean to arrest Mademoiselle?" said Giguët.

"I shall leave her at liberty under bail, until I can carefully examine the charges against her," replied the director.

The mayor offered bail, asking the countess to merely give her word of honor that she would not escape. Laurence blasted him with a look which made him a mortal enemy; a tear started from her eyes, one of those tears of rage which reveal a hell of suffering. The four gentlemen exchanged a terrible look, but remained motionless. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, dreading lest the young people had practised some deceit, were in a state of indescribable stupefaction. Clinging to their chairs these unfortunate parents, finding their sons torn from them after so many fears and their late hopes of safety, sat gazing before them without seeing, listening without hearing.

"Must I ask you to bail me, Monsieur d'Haute-

serre?" cried Laurence to her former guardian, who was roused by the cry, clear and agonizing to his ear as the sound of the last trumpet.

He tried to wipe the tears which sprang to his eyes; he now understood what was passing, and said to his young relation in a quivering voice, "Forgive me, countess; you know that I am yours, body and soul."

Lechesneau, who at first was much struck by the evident tranquillity in which the whole party were dining, now returned to his former opinion of their guilt as he noticed the stupefaction of the old people and the evident anxiety of Laurence, who was seeking to discover the nature of the trap which was set for them.

"Gentlemen," he said, politely, "you are too well-bred to make a useless resistance; follow me to the stables, where I must, in your presence, have the shoes of your horses taken off; they afford important proof of either guilt or innocence. Come, too, mademoiselle."

The blacksmith of Cinq-Cygne and his assistant had been summoned by Lechesneau as experts. While the operation at the stables was going on the justice of peace brought in Gothard and Michu. The work of detaching the shoes of each horse, putting them together and ticketing them, so as to compare them with the hoof-prints in the park, took time. Lechesneau, notified of the arrival of Pigoult, left the prisoners with the gendarmes and returned to the dining-room to dictate

the indictment. The justice of peace called his attention to the condition of Michu's clothes and related the circumstances of his arrest.

"They must have killed the senator and plastered the body up in some wall," said Pigoult.

"I begin to fear it," answered Lechesneau. "Where did you carry that plaster?" he said to Gothard.

The boy began to cry.

"The law frightens him," said Michu, whose eyes were darting flames like those of a lion in the toils.

The servants, who had been detained at the village by order of the mayor, now arrived and filled the ante-chamber where Catherine and Gothard were weeping. To all the questions of the director of the jury and the justice of peace Gothard replied by sobs; and by dint of weeping he brought on a species of convulsion which alarmed them so much that they let him alone. The little scamp, perceiving that he was no longer watched, looked at Michu with a grin, and Michu signified his approval by a glance. Lechesneau left the justice of peace and returned to the stables.

"Monsieur," said Madame d'Hauteserre, at last, addressing Pigoult; "can you explain these arrests?"

"The gentlemen are accused of abducting the senator by armed force and keeping him a prisoner; for we do not think they have murdered him—in spite of appearances," replied Pigoult.

“What penalties are attached to the crime?” asked Monsieur d’Hauteserre.

“Well, as the old law continues in force, and they are not amenable under the Code, the penalty is death,” replied the justice.

“Death!” cried Madame d’Hauteserre, fainting away.

The abbé now came in with his sister, who stopped to speak to Catherine and Madame Durieu.

“We have n’t even seen your cursèd senator!” said Michu.

“Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, Monsieur Grévin, the senator’s valet, and Violette tell another tale,” replied Pigoult, with the sour smile of magisterial conviction.

“I don’t understand a thing about it,” said Michu, dumfounded by this reply, and beginning now to believe that his masters and himself were entangled in some plot which had been laid against them.

Just then the party from the stables returned. Laurence went up to Madame d’Hauteserre, who recovered her senses enough to say: “The penalty is death!”

“Death!” repeated Laurence, looking at the four gentlemen.

The word excited a general terror, of which Giguet, formerly instructed by Corentin, took immediate advantage.



"Everything can be arranged," he said, drawing the Marquis de Simeuse into a corner of the dining-room. "Perhaps after all it is nothing but a joke; you've been a soldier and soldiers understand each other. Tell me, what have you really done with the senator? If you have killed him — why, that's the end of it! But if you have only locked him up, release him, for you see for yourself your game is balked. Do this and I am certain the director of the jury and the senator himself will drop the matter."

"We know absolutely nothing about it," said the marquis.

"If you take that tone the matter is likely to go far," replied the lieutenant.

"Dear cousin," said the Marquis de Simeuse, "we are forced to go to prison; but do not be uneasy; we shall return in a few hours, for there is some misunderstanding in all this which can be explained."

"I hope so, for your sakes, gentlemen," said the magistrate, signing to the gendarmes to remove the four gentlemen, Michu, and Gothard. "Don't take them to Troyes; keep them in your guardhouse at Arcis," he said to the lieutenant; "they must be present to-morrow, at daybreak, when we compare the shoes of their horses with the hoof-prints in the park."

Lechesneau and Pigoult did not follow until they had closely questioned Catherine, Monsieur and Madame

d'Hauteserre, and Laurence. The Durieus, Catherine, and Marthe declared they had only seen their masters at breakfast-time ; Monsieur d'Hauteserre said he had seen them at three o'clock.

When, at midnight, Laurence found herself alone with Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the abbé and his sister, and without the four young men who for the last eighteen months had been the life of the château and the love and joy of her own life, she fell into a gloomy silence which no one present dared to break. No affliction was ever deeper or more complete than hers. At last a deep sigh broke the stillness, and all eyes turned towards the sound.

Marthe, forgotten in a corner, rose, exclaiming, "Death ! They will kill them in spite of their innocence ! "

" Mademoiselle, what is the matter with you ? " said the abbé.

Laurence left the room without replying. She needed solitude to recover strength in presence of this terrible unforeseen disaster.

## XV.

## DOUBTS AND FEARS OF COUNSEL.

AT a distance of thirty-four years, during which three great revolutions have taken place, none but elderly persons can recall the immense excitement produced in Europe by the abduction of a senator of the French Empire. No trial, if we except that of Trumeaux, the grocer of the Place Saint-Michel, and that of the widow Morin, under the Empire; those of Fualdès and de Castaing, under the Restoration; those of Madame Lafarge and Fieschi, under the present government, ever roused so much curiosity or so deep an interest as that of the four young men accused of abducting Malin. Such an attack against a member of his Senate excited the wrath of the Emperor, who was told of the arrest of the delinquents almost at the moment when he first heard of the crime and the negative results of the inquiries. The forest, searched throughout, the department of the Aube, ransacked from end to end, gave not the slightest indication of the passage of the Comte de Gondreville nor of his imprisonment. Napoleon sent for the chief justice, who, after obtaining certain information from the ministry of police, explained to his

Majesty the position of Malin in regard to the Simeuse brothers and the Gondreville estate. The Emperor, at that time pre-occupied with serious matters, considered the affair explained by these anterior facts.

“Those young men are fools,” he said. “A lawyer like Malin will escape any deed they may force him to sign under violence. Watch those nobles, and discover the means they take to set the Comte de Gondreville at liberty.”

He ordered the affair to be conducted with the utmost celerity, regarding it as an attack on his own institutions, a fatal example of resistance to the results of the Revolution, an effort to open the great question of the sales of “national property,” and a hindrance to that fusion of parties which was the constant object of his home policy. Besides all this, he thought himself tricked by these young nobles, who had given him their promise to live peaceably.

“Fouché’s prediction has come true,” he cried, remembering the words uttered two years earlier by his present minister of police, who said them under the impressions conveyed to him by Corentin’s report as to the character and designs of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

It is impossible for persons living under a constitutional government, where no one really cares for that cold and thankless, blind, deaf Thing called public interest, to

imagine the zeal which a mere word of the Emperor was able to inspire in his political or administrative machine. That powerful will seemed to impress itself as much upon things as upon men. His decision once uttered, the Emperor, overtaken by the coalition of 1806, forgot the whole matter. He thought only of new battles to fight, and his mind was occupied in massing his regiments to strike the great blow at the heart of the Prussian monarchy. His desire for prompt justice in the present case found powerful assistance in the great uncertainty which affected the position of all the magistrates of the Empire. Just at this time Cambacérès, as arch-chancellor, and Regnier, chief justice, were preparing to organize *tribunaux de première instance* (lower civil courts), imperial courts, and a court of appeal or supreme court. They were agitating the question of a legal garb or costume; to which Napoleon attached, and very justly, so much importance in all official stations; and they were also inquiring into the character of the persons composing the magistracy. Naturally, therefore, the officials of the department of the Aube considered they could have no better recommendation than to give proofs of their zeal in the matter of the abduction of the Comte de Gondreville. Napoleon's suppositions became certainties to these courtiers and also to the populace.

Peace still reigned on the continent; admiration for

the Emperor was unanimous in France; he cajoled all interests, persons, vanities, and things, in short, everything, even memories. This attack, therefore, directed against his senator, seemed in the eyes of all an assault upon the public welfare. The luckless and innocent gentlemen were the objects of general opprobrium. A few nobles living quietly on their estates deplored the affair among themselves but dared not open their lips; in fact, how was it possible for them to oppose the current of public opinion. Throughout the department the deaths of the eleven persons killed by the Simeuse brothers in 1792 from the windows of the hôtel Cinq-Cygne were brought up against them. It was feared that other returned and now emboldened *émigrés* might follow this example of violence against those who had bought their estates from the "national domain," as a method of protesting against what they might call an unjust spoliation.

The unfortunate young nobles were therefore considered as robbers, brigands, murderers; and their connection with Michu was particularly fatal to them. Michu, who was declared, either he or his father-in-law, to have cut off all the heads that fell under the Terror in that department, was made the subject of ridiculous tales. The exasperation of the public mind was all the more intense because nearly all the functionaries of the department owed their offices to Malin. No generous

voice uplifted itself against the verdict of the public. Besides all this, the accused had no legal means with which to combat prejudice ; for the Code of Brumaire, year IV., giving as it did both the prosecution of a charge and the verdict upon it into the hands of a jury, deprived the accused of the vast protection of an appeal against legal suspicion.

The day after the arrest all the inhabitants of the château of Cinq-Cygné, both masters and servants, were summoned to appear before the prosecuting jury. Cinq-Cygne was left in charge of a farmer, under the supervision of the abbé and his sister who moved into it. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, with Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, went to Troyes and occupied a small house belonging to Durieu in one of the long and wide faubourgs which lead from the little town. Laurence's heart was wrung when she at last comprehended the temper of the populace, the malignity of the bourgeoisie, and the hostility of the administration, from the many little events which happened to them as relatives of prisoners accused of criminal wrong-doing and about to be judged in a provincial town. Instead of hearing encouraging or compassionate words they heard only speeches which called for vengeance ; proofs of hatred surrounded them in place of the strict politeness or the reserve required by mere decency ; but above all they were conscious of an isolation which every mind must

feel, but more particularly those which are made distrustful by misfortune.

Laurence, who had recovered her vigor of mind, relied upon the innocence of the accused, and despised the community too much to be frightened by the stern and silent disapproval they met with everywhere. She sustained the courage of Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, all the while thinking of the judicial struggle which was now being hurried on. She was, however, to receive a blow she little expected, which, undoubtedly, diminished her courage.

In the midst of this great disaster, at the moment when this afflicted family were made to feel themselves, as it were, in a desert, a man suddenly became exalted in Laurence's eyes and showed the full beauty of his character. The day after the indictment was found by the jury, and the prisoners were finally committed for trial, the Marquis de Chargebœuf courageously appeared, still in the same old calèche, to support and protect his young cousin. Foreseeing the haste with which the law would be administered, this chief of a great family had already gone to Paris and secured the services of the most able as well as the most honest lawyer of the old school, named Bordin, who was for ten years counsel of the nobility in Paris, and was ultimately succeeded by the celebrated Derville. This excellent lawyer chose for his assistant the grandson of a former



president of the parliament of Normandy, whose studies had been made under his tuition. This young lawyer, who was destined to be appointed deputy-attorney-general in Paris after the conclusion of the present trial, became eventually one of the most celebrated of French magistrates. Monsieur de Grandville, for that was his name, accepted the defence of the four young men, being glad of an opportunity to make his first appearance as an advocate with distinction.

The old marquis, alarmed at the ravages which troubles had wrought in Laurence's appearance, was charmingly kind and considerate. He made no allusion to his neglected advice; he presented Bordin as an oracle whose counsel must be followed to the letter, and young de Grandville as a defender in whom the utmost confidence might be placed.

Laurence held out her hand to the kind old man, and pressed his with an eagerness which delighted him.

"You were right," she said.

"Will you now take my advice?" he asked.

The young countess bowed her head in assent, as did Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre.

"Well, then, come to my house; it is in the middle of the town, close to the courthouse. You and your lawyers will be better off there than here, where you are crowded and too far from the field of battle. Here, you would have to cross the town twice a day."

Laurence accepted, and the old man took her with Madame d'Hauteserre to his house, which became the home of the Cinq-Cygne household and the lawyers of the defence during the whole time the trial lasted. After dinner, when the doors were closed, Bordin made Laurence relate every circumstance of the affair, entreating her to omit nothing, not the most trifling detail. Though many of the facts had already been told to him and his young assistant by the marquis on their journey from Paris to Troyes, Bordin listened, his feet on the fender, without obtruding himself into the recital. The young lawyer, however, could not help being divided between his admiration for Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the attention he was bound to give to the facts of his case.

"Is that really all?" asked Bordin when Laurence had related the events of the drama just as the present narrative has given them up to the present time.

"Yes," she answered.

Profound silence reigned for several minutes in the salon of the Chargeboœuf mansion where this scene took place, — one of the most important which occur in life. All cases are judged by the counsellors engaged in them, just as the death or life of a patient is foreseen by a physician, before the final struggle which the one sustains against nature, the other against law. Laurence, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and the marquis

sat with their eyes fixed on the swarthy and deeply pitted face of the old lawyer, who was now to pronounce the words of life or death. Monsieur d'Hauteserre wiped the sweat from his brow. Laurence looked at the younger man and noted his saddened face.

"Well, my dear Bordin?" said the marquis at last, holding out his snuffbox, from which the old lawyer took a pinch in an absent-minded way.

Bordin rubbed the calf of his leg, covered with thick stockings of black raw silk, for he always wore black cloth breeches and a coat made somewhat in the shape of those which are now termed *à la Française*. He cast his shrewd eyes upon his clients with an anxious expression, the effect of which was icy.

"Must I analyze all that?" he said; "am I to speak frankly?"

"Yes; go on, monsieur," said Laurence.

"All that you have innocently done can be converted into proof against you," said the old lawyer. "We cannot save your friends; we can only reduce the penalty. The sale which you induced Michu to make of his property will be taken as evident proof of your criminal intentions against the senator. You sent your servants to Troyes so that you might be alone; that is all the more plausible because it is actually true. The elder d'Hauteserre made an unfortunate speech to Beauvisage, which will be your ruin. You yourself,

mademoiselle, made another in your own courtyard, which proves that you have long shown ill-will to the possessor of Gondreville. Besides, you were at the gate of the *rond-point*, apparently on the watch, about the time when the abduction took place; if they have not arrested you, it is solely because they fear to bring a sentimental element into the affair."

"The case cannot be successfully defended," said Monsieur de Grandville.

"The less so," continued Bordin, "because we cannot tell the whole truth. Michu and the Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre must hold to the assertion that you merely went for an excursion into the forest and returned to Cinq-Cygne for luncheon. Allowing that we can show you were in the house at three o'clock (the exact hour at which the attack was made), who are our witnesses? Marthe, the wife of one of the accused, the Durieus, and Catherine, your own servants, and Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, father and mother of two of the accused. Such testimony is valueless; the law does not admit it against you, and common-sense rejects it when given in your favor. If, on the other hand, you were to say you went to the forest to recover eleven hundred thousand francs in gold, you would send the accused to the galleys as robbers. Judge, jury, audience, and the whole of France would believe that you took that gold from Gondreville, and

abducted the senator that you might ransack his house. The accusation as it now stands is not wholly clear, but tell the truth about the matter and it would become as plain as day; the jury would declare that the robbery explained the mysterious features,—for in these days, you must remember, a royalist means a thief. This very case is welcomed as a legitimate political vengeance. The prisoners are now in danger of the death penalty; but that is not dishonoring under some circumstances. Whereas, if they can be proved to have stolen money, which can never be made to seem excusable, you lose all benefit of whatever interest may attach to persons condemned to death for other crimes. If, at the first, you had shown the hiding-places of the treasure, the plan of the forest, the tubes in which the gold was buried, and the gold itself, as an explanation of your day's work, it is possible you might have been believed by an impartial magistrate, but as it is we must be silent. God grant that none of the prisoners may reveal the truth and compromise the defence; if they do, we must rely on our cross-examinations."

Laurence wrung her hands in despair and raised her eyes to heaven with a despondent look, for she saw at last in all its depths the gulf into which her cousins had fallen. The marquis and the young lawyer agreed with the dreadful view of Bordin. Old d'Hauteserre wept.

“ Ah! why did they not listen to the Abbé Goujet and fly!” cried Madame d’Hauteserre, exasperated.

“ If they could have escaped, and you prevented them,” said Bordin, “ you have killed them yourselves. Judgment by default gains time; time enables the innocent to clear themselves. This is the most mysterious case I have ever known in my life, in the course of which I have certainly seen and known many strange things.”

“ It is inexplicable to every one, even to us,” said Monsieur de Grandville. “ If the prisoners are innocent some one else has committed the crime. Five persons do not come to a place as if by enchantment, obtain five horses shod precisely like those of the accused, imitate the appearance of some of them, and put Malin apparently underground for the sole purpose of casting suspicion on Michu and the four gentlemen. The unknown guilty parties must have had some strong reason for wearing the skin, as it were, of five innocent men. To discover them, even to get upon their traces, we need as much power as the government itself, as many agents and as many eyes as there are townships in a radius of fifty miles.”

“ The thing is impossible,” said Bordin. “ There’s no use thinking of it. Since society invented law it has never found a way to give an innocent prisoner an equal chance against a magistrate who is pre-disposed against

him. Law is not bilateral. The defence, without spies or police, cannot call social power to the rescue of its innocent clients. Innocence has nothing on her side but reason, and reasoning which may strike a judge is often powerless on the narrow minds of jurymen. The whole department is against you. The eight jurors who have signed the indictment are each and all purchasers of national domain. Among the trial jurors we are certain to have some who have either sold or bought the same property. In short, we can get nothing but a Malin jury. You must therefore set up a consistent defence, hold fast to it, and perish in your innocence. You will certainly be condemned. But there's a court of appeal; we will go there and try to remain there as long as possible. If in the mean time we can collect proofs in your favor you must apply for pardon. That's the anatomy of the business, and my advice. If we triumph (for everything is possible in law) it will be a miracle; but your advocate Monsieur de Grandville is the most likely man among all I know to produce that miracle, and I'll do my best to help him."

"The senator has the key to the mystery," said Monsieur de Grandville; "for a man knows his enemies and why they are so. Here we find him leaving Paris at the close of the winter, coming to Gondreville alone, shutting himself up with his notary, and delivering himself over, as one might say, to five men who seize him."

“Certainly,” said Bordin, “his conduct seems inexplicable. But how could we, in the face of a hostile community, become accusers when we ourselves are the accused? We should need the help and good-will of the government and a thousand times more proof than is wanted in ordinary circumstances. I am convinced there was premeditation, and subtle premeditation, on the part of our mysterious adversaries, who must have known the situation of Michu and the Messieurs de Simeuse towards Malin. Not to utter one word; not to steal one thing! — remarkable prudence! I see something very different from ordinary evil-doers behind those masks. But what would be the use of saying so to the sort of jurors we shall have to face?”

This insight into hidden matters which gives such power to certain lawyers and certain magistrates astonished and confounded Laurence; her heart was wrung by that inexorable logic.

“Out of every hundred criminal cases,” continued Bordin, “there are not ten where the law really lays bare the truth to its full extent; and there is perhaps a good third in which the truth is never brought to light at all. Yours is one of those cases which are inexplicable to all parties, to accused and accusers, to the law and to the public. As for the Emperor, he has other fish to fry than to consider the case of these gentlemen, supposing even that they had not conspired against him. But



who the devil *is* Malin's enemy? and what has really been done with him?"

Bordin and Monsieur de Grandville looked at each other; they seemed in doubt as to Laurence's veracity. This evident suspicion was the most cutting of all the many pangs the girl had suffered in the affair; and she turned upon the lawyers a look which effectually put an end to their distrust.

The next day the indictment was handed over to the defence, and the lawyers were then enabled to communicate with the prisoners. Bordin informed the family that the six accused men were "well supported,"—using a professional term.

"Monsieur de Grandville will defend Michu," said Bordin.

"Michu!" exclaimed the Marquis de Chargebœuf, amazed at the change.

"He is the pivot of the affair—the danger lies there," replied the old lawyer.

"If he is more in danger than the others, I think that is just," cried Laurence.

"We see certain chances," said Monsieur de Grandville, "and we shall study them carefully. If we are able to save these gentlemen it will be because Monsieur d'Hauteserre ordered Michu to repair one of the stone posts in the covered way, and also because a wolf has been seen in the forest; in a criminal court everything

depends on discussions, and discussions often turn on trivial matters which then become of immense importance."

Laurence sank into that inward dejection which humiliates the soul of all thoughtful and energetic persons when the uselessness of thought and action is made manifest to them. It was no longer a matter of overthrowing a usurper, or of coming to the help of devoted friends, — fanatical sympathies wrapped in a shroud of mystery. She now saw all social forces full-armed against her cousins and herself. There was no taking a prison by assault with her own hands, no deliverance of prisoners from the midst of a hostile population and beneath the eyes of a watchful police. So, when the young lawyer, alarmed at the stupor of the generous and noble girl, which the natural expression of her face made still more noticeable, endeavored to revive her courage, she turned to him and said: "I must be silent; I suffer, — I wait."

The accent, gesture, and look with which the words were said made this answer one of those sublime things which only need a wider stage to make them famous.

A few moments later old d'Hauteserre was saying to the Marquis de Chargebœuf: "What efforts I have made for my two unfortunate sons! I have already laid by in the Funds enough to give them eight thousand francs a year. If they had only been willing to

serve in the army they would have reached the higher grades by this time, and could now have married to advantage. Instead of that, all my plans are scattered to the winds!"

"How can you," said his wife, "think of their interests when it is a question of their honor and their lives?"

"Monsieur d'Hauteserre thinks of everything," said the marquis.

## XVI.

## MARTHE INVEIGLED.

WHILE the masters of Cinq-Cygne were waiting at Troyes for the opening of the trial before the Criminal court and vainly soliciting permission to see the prisoners, an event of the utmost importance had taken place at the château.

Marthe returned to Cinq-Cygne as soon as she had given her testimony before the indicting jury. This testimony was so insignificant that it was not thought necessary to summon her before the Criminal court. Like all persons of extreme sensibility, the poor woman sat silent in the salon, where she kept company with Mademoiselle Goujet, in a pitiable state of stupefaction. To her, as to the abbé, and indeed to all others who did not know how the accused had been employed on that day, their innocence seemed doubtful. There were moments when Marthe believed that Michu and his masters and Laurence had executed vengeance on the senator. The unhappy woman now knew Michu's devotion well enough to be certain that he was the one who would be most in danger, not only because of his antecedents, but because of the part he was sure to have taken in the execution of the scheme.

The Abbé Goujet and his sister and Marthe were bewildered among the possibilities to which this opinion gave rise; and yet, in the process of thinking them over, their minds insensibly took hold of them in a certain way. The absolute doubt which Descartes demands can no more exist in the brain of a man than a vacuum can exist in nature, and the mental operation required to produce it would, like the effect of a pneumatic machine, be exceptional and anomalous. Whatever a case may be, the mind believes in something. Now Marthe was so afraid that the accused were guilty that her fear became equivalent to belief; and this condition of her mind proved fatal to her.

Five days after the arrests, just as she was in the act of going to bed about ten o'clock at night, she was called from the courtyard by her mother, who had come from the farm on foot.

"A laboring man from Troyes wants to speak to you; he is sent by Michu, and is waiting in the covered way," she said to Marthe.

They passed through the breach so as to take the shortest path. In the darkness it was impossible for Marthe to distinguish anything more than the form of a person which loomed through the shadows.

"Speak, madame; so that I may be certain you are really Madame Michu," said the person, in a rather anxious voice.

“I am Madame Michu,” said Marthe; “what do you want of me?”

“Very good,” said the unknown, “give me your hand; do not fear me. I come,” he added, leaning towards her and speaking low, “from Michu with a note for you. I am employed at the prison, and if my superiors discover my absence we shall all be lost. Trust me; your good father placed me where I am. For that reason Michu counted on my helping him.”

He put a letter into Marthe’s hand and disappeared toward the forest without waiting for an answer. Marthe trembled at the thought that she was now to hear the secret of the mystery. She ran to the farm with her mother and shut herself up to read the following letter: —

MY DEAR MARTHE, — You can rely on the discretion of the man who will give you this letter; he does not know how to read or to write. He is a stanch Republican, and shared in Babœuf’s conspiracy; your father often made use of him, and he regards the senator as a traitor. Now, my dear wife, attend to my directions. The senator has been shut up by us in the cave where our masters were hidden. The poor creature had provisions for only five days, and as it is our interest that he should live, I wish you, as soon as you receive this letter, to take him food for at least five days more. The forest is of course watched; therefore take as many precautions as we formerly did for our young masters. Don’t say a word to Malin; don’t speak to him; and put on one of our masks which you will find on the steps which lead down to the

cave. Unless you wish to compromise our heads you must be absolutely silent about this letter and the secret I have now confided to you. Don't say a word to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, who might tell of it. Don't fear for me. We are certain that the matter will turn out well; when the time comes Malin himself will save us. I don't need to tell you to burn this letter as soon as you have read it, for it would cost me my head if a line of it were seen. I kiss you for now and always,

MICHU.

The existence of the cave was known only to Marthe, her son, Michu, the four gentlemen, and Laurence; or rather, Marthe, to whom her husband had not related the incident of his meeting with Peyrade and Corentin, believed it was known only to them. Had she consulted her mistress and the two lawyers, who knew the innocence of the prisoners, the shrewd Bordin would have gained some light upon the perfidious trap which was evidently laid for his clients. But Marthe, acting like most women under a first impulse, was convinced by this proof which came to her own eyes, and flung the letter into the fire as directed. Nevertheless, moved by a singular gleam of caution, she caught a portion of it from the flames, tore off the five first lines, which compromised no one, and sewed them into the hem of her dress. Terrified at the thought that the prisoner had been without food for twenty-four hours, she resolved to carry bread, meat, and wine to him at once; curiosity

as well as humanity permitting no delay. Accordingly, she heated her oven and made, with her mother's help, a *paté* of hare and ducks, a rice cake, roasted two fowls, selected three bottles of wine, and baked two loaves of bread. About two in the morning she started for the forest, carrying the load on her back, accompanied by Couraut, who in all such expeditions showed wonderful sagacity as a guide. He scented strangers at immense distances, and as soon as he was certain of their presence he returned to his mistress with a low growl, looking at her fixedly and turning his muzzle in the direction of the danger.

Marthe reached the pond about three in the morning, and left the dog as sentinel on the bank. After half an hour's labor in clearing the entrance she came with a dark lantern to the door of the cave, her face covered with a mask, which she had found, as directed, on the steps. The imprisonment of the senator seemed to have been long premeditated. A hole about a foot square, which Marthe had never seen before, was roughly cut in the upper part of the iron door which closed the cave; but in order to prevent Malin from using the time and patience all prisoners have at their command in loosening the iron bar which held the door, it was securely fastened with a padlock.

The senator, who had risen from his bed of moss, sighed when he saw the masked face and felt that there



*“ The senator, who had risen from his bed of moss,  
sighed when he saw the masked face.”*







was no chance then of his deliverance. He examined Marthe, as much as he could by the unsteady light of her dark lantern, and he recognized her by her clothes, her stoutness, and her motions. When she passed the *paté* through the door he dropped it to seize her hand and then, with great swiftmess, he tried to pull the rings from her fingers, — one her wedding-ring, the other a gift from Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

“ You cannot deny that it is you, my dear Madame Michu,” he said.

Marthe closed her fist the moment she felt his fingers, and gave him a vigorous blow in the chest. Then, without a word, she turned away and cut a stick, at the end of which she held out to the senator the rest of the provisions.

“ What do they want of me ? ” he asked.

Marthe departed giving him no answer. By five o'clock she had reached the edge of the forest and was warned by Couraut of the presence of strangers. She retraced her steps and made for the pavilion where she had lived so long ; but just as she entered the avenue she was seen from afar by the forester of Gondreville, and she quickly reflected that her best plan was to go straight up to him.

“ You are out early, Madame Michu,” he said, accosting her.

“ We are so unfortunate,” she replied, “ that I am

obliged to do a servant's work myself. I am going to Bellache for some grain."

"Have n't you any at Cinq-Cygne?" said the forester.

Marthe made no answer. She continued on her way and reached the farm at Bellache, where she asked Beauvisage to give her some seed-grain, saying that Monsieur d'Hautesserre advised her to get it from him to renew her crop. As soon as Marthe had left the farm, the forester went there to find out what she asked for.

Six days later, Marthe, determined to be prudent, went at midnight with her provisions so as to avoid the keepers who were evidently patrolling the forest. After carrying a third supply to the senator she suddenly became terrified on hearing the abbé read aloud the public examination of the prisoners, — for the trial was by that time begun. She took the abbé aside, and after obliging him to swear that he would keep the secret she was about to reveal as though it was said to him in the confessional, she showed him the fragments of Michu's letter, told him the contents of it, and also the secret of the hiding-place where the senator then was.

The abbé at once inquired if she had other letters from her husband that he might compare the writing. Marthe went to her home to fetch them and there found a summons to appear in court. By the time she re-

turned to the château the abbé and his sister had received a similar summons on behalf of the defence. They were obliged therefore to start for Troyes immediately. Thus all the personages of our drama, even those who were only, as it were, supernumeraries, were collected on the spot where the fate of the two families was about to be decided.

## XVII.

## THE TRIAL.

THERE are but few localities in France where Law derives from outward appearance the dignity which ought always to accompany it. Yet it surely is, after religion and royalty, the greatest engine of society. Everywhere, even in Paris, the meanness of its surroundings, the wretched arrangement of the court-rooms, their barrenness and want of decoration in the most ornate and showy nation upon earth in the matter of its public monuments, lessens the action of the law's mighty power. At the farther end of some oblong room may be seen a desk with a green baize covering raised on a platform; behind it sit the judges on the commonest of arm-chairs. To the left, is the seat of the public prosecutor, and beside him, close to the wall, is a long pen filled with chairs for the jury. Opposite to the jury is another pen with a bench for the prisoners and the gendarmes who guard them. The clerk of the court sits below the platform at a table covered with the papers of the case. Before the imperial changes in the administration of justice were instituted, a commissary of the government and the director of the jury



each had a seat and a table, one to the right, the other to the left of the baize-covered desk. Two sheriffs hovered about in the space left in front of the desk for the station of witnesses. Facing the judges and against the wall above the entrance, there is always a shabby gallery reserved for officials and for women, to which admittance is granted only by the president of the court, to whom the proper management of the courtroom belongs. The non-privileged public are compelled to stand in the empty space between the door of the hall and the bar. This normal appearance of all French law courts and assize-rooms was that of the Criminal court of Troyes.

In April, 1806, neither the four judges nor the president (or chief-justice) who made up the court, nor the public prosecutor, the director of the jury, the commissary of the government, nor the sheriffs or lawyers, in fact no one except the gendarmes, wore any robes or other distinctive sign which might have relieved the nakedness of the surroundings and the somewhat meagre aspect of the figures. The crucifix was suppressed; its example was no longer held up before the eyes of justice and of guilt. All was dull and vulgar. The paraphernalia so necessary to excite social interest is perhaps a consolation to criminals. On this occasion the eagerness of the public was what it ever has been and ever will be in trials of this kind, so long as France

refuses to recognize that the admission of the public to the courts involves publicity, and that the publicity given to trials is a terrible penalty which would never have been inflicted had legislators reflected on it. Customs are often more cruel than laws. Customs are the deeds of men, but laws are the judgment of a nation. Customs in which there is often no judgment are stronger than laws.

Crowds surrounded the courtroom; the president was obliged to station squads of soldiers to guard the doors. The audience, standing below the bar, was so crowded that persons suffocated. Monsieur de Grandville, defending Michu, Bordin, defending the Simeuse brothers, and a lawyer of Troyes who appeared for the d'Hauteserres, were in their seats before the opening of the court; their faces wore a look of confidence. When the prisoners were brought in, sympathetic murmurs were heard at the appearance of the young men, whose faces, 'in twenty days' imprisonment and anxiety, had somewhat paled. The perfect likeness of the twins excited the deepest interest. Perhaps the spectators thought that Nature would exercise some special protection in the case of her own anomalies, and felt ready to join in repairing the harm done to them by destiny. Their noble, simple faces, showing no signs of shame, still less of bravado, touched the women's hearts. The four gentlemen and Gothard

wore the clothes in which they had been arrested ; but Michu, whose coat and trousers were among the “ articles of testimony,” so-called, had put on his best clothes, — a blue surtout, a brown velvet waistcoat *à la Robespierre*, and a white cravat. The poor man paid the penalty of his dangerous-looking face. When he cast a glance of his yellow eye, so clear and so profound upon the audience, a murmur of repulsion answered it. The assembly chose to see the finger of God bringing him to the dock where his father-in-law had sacrificed so many victims. This man, truly great, looked at his masters, repressing a smile of scorn. He seemed to say to them, “I am injuring your cause.” Five of the prisoners exchanged greetings with their counsel. Gothard still played the part of an idiot.

After several challenges, made with much sagacity by the lawyers of the defence under advice of the Marquis de Chargebœuf, who boldly took a seat beside Bordin and de Grandville, the jury were empanelled, the indictment was read, and the prisoners were brought up separately to be examined. They answered every question with remarkable unanimity. After riding about the forest all the morning, they had returned to Cinq-Cygne for breakfast at one o'clock. After that meal, from three to half-past five in the afternoon, they had returned to the forest. That was the basis of each testimony ; any variations were merely individual cir-

cumstances. When the president asked the Messieurs de Simeuse why they had ridden out so early, they both declared that wishing, since their return, to buy back Gondreville and intending to make an offer to Malin who had arrived the night before, they had gone out early with their cousin and Michu to make certain examinations of the property on which to base their offer. During that time the Messieurs d'Hauteserre, their cousin, and Gothard had chased a wolf which was reported in the forest by the peasantry. If the director of the jury had sought for the prints of their horses' feet in the forest as carefully as in the park of Gondreville, he would have found proof of their presence at long distances from the house.

The examination of the Messieurs d'Hauteserre corroborated this testimony, and was in harmony with their preliminary depositions. The necessity of some reason for their ride suggested to each of them the excuse of hunting. The peasants had given warning, a few days earlier, of a wolf in the forest, and on that they had fastened as a pretext.

The public prosecutor, however, pointed out a discrepancy between the first statements of the Messieurs d'Hauteserre, in which they mentioned that the whole party hunted together, and the defence now made by the Messieurs de Simeuse that their purpose on that day was the valuation of the forest.

Monsieur de Grandville here called attention to the fact that as the crime was not committed until after two o'clock in the afternoon, the prosecution had no ground to question their word when they stated the manner in which they employed their morning.

The prosecutor replied that the prisoners had an interest in concealing their preparations for the abduction of the senator.

The remarkable ability of the defence was now felt. Judges, jurors, and audience became aware that victory would be hotly contested. Bordin and Monsieur de Grandville had studied their ground and foreseen everything. Innocence is required to render a clear and plausible account of its actions. The duty of the defence is to present a consistent and probable tale in opposition to an insufficient and improbable accusation. To counsel who regard their client as innocent, an accusation is false. The public examination of the four gentlemen sufficiently explained the matter in their favor. So far all was well. But the examination of Michu was more serious; there the real struggle began. It was now clear to every one why Monsieur de Grandville had preferred to take charge of the servant's defence rather than that of his masters.

Michu admitted his threats against Marion; but denied that he had made them violently. As for the ambush in which he was supposed to have watched for his

enemy, he said he was merely making his rounds in the park; the senator and Monsieur Grévin might perhaps have been alarmed at the sight of his gun and have thought his intentions hostile when they were really inoffensive. He called attention to the fact that in the dusk a man who was not in the habit of hunting might easily fancy a gun was pointed at him, whereas, in point of fact, it was held in his hand at half-cock. To explain the condition of his clothes when arrested, he said he had slipped and fallen in the breach on his way home. "I could scarcely see my way," he said, "and the loose stones slipped from under me as I climbed the bank." As for the plaster which Gothard was bringing him, he replied as he had done in all previous examinations, that he wanted it to secure one of the stone posts of the covered way.

The public prosecutor and the president asked him to explain how he could have been at the top of the covered way engaged in mending a stone post and at the same time in the breach of the moat leading to the château; more especially as the justice of peace, the gendarmes and the forester all declared they had heard him approach them from the lower road. To this Michu replied that Monsieur d'Hauteserre had blamed him for not having mended the post, — which he was anxious to have finished because there were difficulties about that road with the township, — and he had there-

fore gone up to the château to report that the work was done.

Monsieur d'Hauteserre had, in fact, put up a fence above the covered way to prevent the township from taking possession of it. Michu seeing the important part which the state of his clothes was likely to play, invented this subterfuge. If, in law, truth is often like falsehood, falsehood on the other hand has a very great resemblance to truth. The defence and the prosecution both attached much importance to this testimony, which became one of the leading points of the trial on account of the vigor of the defence and the suspicions of the prosecution.

Gothard, instructed no doubt by Monsieur de Grandville, for up to that time he had only wept when they questioned him, admitted that Michu had told him to carry the plaster.

"Why did neither you nor Gothard take the justice of peace and the forester to the stone post and show them your work?" said the public prosecutor, addressing Michu.

"Because," replied the man, "I did n't believe there was any serious accusation against us."

All the prisoners except Gothard were now removed from the courtroom. When Gothard was left alone the president adjured him to speak the truth for his own sake, pointing out that his pretended idiocy had

come to an end ; none of the jurors believed him imbecile ; if he refused to answer the court he ran the risk of serious penalty ; whereas by telling the truth at once he would probably be released. Gothard wept, hesitated, and finally ended by saying that Michu had told him to carry several sacks of plaster ; but that each time he had met him near the farm. He was asked how many sacks he had carried.

“ Three,” he replied.

An argument hereupon ensued as to whether the three sacks included the one which Gothard was carrying at the time of the arrest (which reduced the number of the other sacks to two) or whether there were three without the last. The debate ended in favor of the first proposition, the jury considering that only two sacks had been used. They appeared to have a foregone conviction on that point, but Bordin and Monsieur de Grandville judged it best to surfeit them with plaster, and weary them so thoroughly with the argument that they would no longer comprehend the question. Monsieur de Grandville made it appear that experts ought to have been sent to examine the stone posts.

“ The director of the jury,” he said, “ has contented himself with merely visiting the place, less for the purpose of making a careful examination than to trap Michu in a lie ; this, in our opinion, was a failure of duty, but the blunder is to our advantage.”



On this the Court appointed experts to examine the posts and see if one of them had been really mended and reset. The public prosecutor, on his side, endeavored to make capital of the affair before the experts could testify.

You "seem to have chosen," he said to Michu, who was now brought back in the courtroom, "an hour when the daylight was waning, from half-past five to half-past six o'clock, to mend this post and to cement it all alone."

"Monsieur d'Hauteserre had blamed me for not doing it," replied Michu.

"But," said the prosecutor, "if you used that plaster on the post you must have had a trough and a trowel. Now, if you went to the château to tell Monsieur d'Hauteserre that you had done the work, how do you explain the fact that Gothard was bringing you more plaster. You must have passed your farm on your way to the château, and you would naturally have left your tools at home and stopped Gothard."

This overwhelming argument produced a painful silence in the courtroom.

"Come," said the prosecutor, "you had better admit at once that what you buried was *not a stone post*."

"Do you think it was the senator?" said Michu, sarcastically.

Monsieur de Grandville hereupon demanded that the

public prosecutor should explain his meaning. Michu was accused of abduction and the concealment of a person, but not of murder. Such an insinuation was a serious matter. The code of Brumaire, year IV., forbade the public prosecutor from presenting any fresh count at the trial; he must keep within the indictment or the proceedings would be annulled.

The public prosecutor replied that Michu, the person chiefly concerned in the abduction and who, in the interests of his masters, had taken the responsibility on his own shoulders, might have thought it necessary to plaster up the entrance of the hiding-place, still undiscovered, where the senator was now immured.

Pressed with questions, hampered by the presence of Gothard, and brought into contradiction with himself, Michu struck his fist upon the edge of the dock with a resounding blow and said: "I have had nothing whatever to do with the abduction of the senator. I hope and believe his enemies have merely imprisoned him; when he reappears you'll find out that the plaster was put to no such use."

"Good!" said de Grandville, addressing the public prosecutor; "you have done more for my client's cause than anything I could have said."

The first day's session ended with this bold declaration, which surprised the judges and gave an advantage to the defence. The lawyers of the town and Bordin

himself congratulated the young advocate. The prosecutor, uneasy at the assertion, feared that he had fallen into some trap ; in fact he was really caught in a snare that was cleverly set for him by the defence and admirably played off by Gothard. The wits of the town declared that he had white-washed the affair and splashed his own cause, and had made the accused as white as the plaster itself. France is the domain of satire, which reigns supreme in our land ; Frenchmen jest on a scaffold, at the Beresina, at the barricades, and some will doubtless appear with a quirk upon their lips at the grand assizes of the Last Judgment.

## XVIII.

## TRIAL CONTINUED: CRUEL VICISSITUDES.

ON the morrow the witnesses for the prosecution were examined, — Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, Grévin himself, the senator's valet, and Violette, whose testimony can readily be imagined from the facts already told. They all identified the five prisoners, with more or less hesitation as to the four gentlemen, but with absolute certainty as to Michu. Beauvisage repeated Robert d'Hauteserre's speech when he met them at day-break in the park. The peasant who had bought Monsieur d'Hauteserre's calf testified to overhearing that of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. The experts, who had compared the hoof-prints with the shoes on the horses ridden by the five prisoners and found them absolutely alike, confirmed their previous depositions. This point was naturally one of vehement contention between Monsieur de Grandville and the prosecuting officer. The defence called the blacksmith at Cinq-Cygne and succeeded in proving that he had sold several horse-shoes of the same pattern to strangers who were not known in the place. The blacksmith declared, moreover, that he was in the habit of shoeing in this par-

ticular manner not only the horses of the château de Cinq-Cygne but those from other places in the canton. It was also proved that the horse which Michu habitually rode was always shod at Troyes, and the mark of that shoe was not among the hoof-prints found in the park.

“ Michu’s double was not aware of this circumstance, or he would have provided for it,” said Monsieur de Grandville, looking at the jury. “ Neither has the prosecution shown what horses our clients rode.”

He ridiculed the testimony of Violette so far as it concerned a recognition of the horses, seen from a long distance, from behind, and after dusk. Still, in spite of all his efforts, the body of the evidence was against Michu ; and the prosecutor, judge, jury, and audience were impressed with a feeling (as the lawyers for the defence had foreseen) that the guilt of the servant carried with it that of the masters. So the vital interest centred on all that concerned Michu. His bearing was noble. He showed in his answers the sagacity with which nature had endowed him ; and the public, seeing him on his mettle, recognized his superiority. And yet, strange to say, the more they understood him the more certainty they felt that he was the instigator of the outrage.

The witnesses for the defence, always less important in the eyes of a jury and of the law than the witnesses

for the prosecution, seemed to testify as in duty bound, and were listened to with that allowance. In the first place neither Marthe, nor Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre took the oath. Catherine and the Durieus, in their capacity as servants, did not take it. Monsieur d'Hauteserre stated that he had ordered Michu to replace and mend the stone post which had been thrown down. The deposition of the experts sent to examine the fence, which was now read, confirmed his testimony ; but they helped the prosecution by declaring they could not fix the exact time at which the repairs had been made ; it might have been several weeks or no more than twenty days.

The appearance of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne excited the liveliest curiosity : but the sight of her cousins in the prisoners' dock after three weeks' separation affected her so much that her emotions gave the audience an impression of guilt. She felt an overwhelming desire to stand beside the twins, and was obliged, as she afterwards admitted, to use all her strength to repress the longing that came into her mind to kill the prosecutor so as to stand in the eyes of the world as a criminal beside them. She testified, with simplicity, that riding from Cinq-Cygne and seeing smoke in the park of Gondreville, she had supposed there was a fire ; at first she thought they were burning weeds or brush ; " but later," she added, " I observed

a circumstance which I offer to the attention of the Court. I found in the frogging of my habit and in the folds of my collar small fragments of what appeared to be burned paper which were floating in the air."

"Was there much smoke?" asked Bordin.

"Yes," replied Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, "I feared a conflagration."

"This is enough to change the whole inquiry," remarked Bordin. "I request the Court to order an immediate examination of that region of the park where the fire occurred."

The president ordered the inquiry.

Grévin, recalled by the defence and questioned on this circumstance, declared he knew nothing about it. But Bordin and he exchanged looks which mutually enlightened them.

"The gist of the case is there," thought the old lawyer.

"They've laid their finger on it," thought the notary.

But each shrewd head considered the following up of this point useless. Bordin reflected that Grévin would be silent as the grave; and Grévin congratulated himself that every sign of the fire had been effaced.

To settle this point, which seemed a mere accessory to the trial and somewhat puerile (but which is really essential in the justification which history owes to these young men), the experts and Pigoult, who were des-

patched by the president to examine the park, reported that they could find no traces of a bonfire.

Bordin summoned two laborers, who testified to having dug over, under the direction of the forester, a tract of ground in the park where the grass had been burned; but they declared they had not observed the nature of the ashes they had buried.

The forester, recalled by the defence, said he had received from the senator himself, as he was passing the château of Gondreville on his way to the masquerade at Arcis, an order to dig over that particular piece of ground which the senator had remarked as needing it.

“Had papers, or herbage been burned there?”

“I could not say. I saw nothing that made me think that papers had been burned there,” replied the forester.

“At any rate,” said Bordin, “if, as it appears, a fire was kindled on that piece of ground some one brought to the spot whatever was burned there.”

The testimony of the abbé and that of Mademoiselle Goujet made a favorable impression. They said that as they left the church after vespers and were walking towards home, they met the four gentlemen and Michu leaving the château on horseback and making their way to the forest. The character, position, and known uprightness of the Abbé Goujet gave weight to his words.



The summing up of the public prosecutor, who felt sure of obtaining a verdict, was of the nature of all such speeches. The prisoners were the incorrigible enemies of France, her institutions and laws. They thirsted for tumult and conspiracy. Though they had belonged to the army of Condé and had shared in the late attempts against the life of the Emperor, that magnanimous sovereign had erased their names from the list of *émigrés*. This was the return they made for his clemency! In short, all the oratorical declamations of the Bourbons against the Bonapartists, which in our day are repeated against the republicans and the legitimists by the Younger Branch, flourished in the speech. These trite commonplaces, which might have some meaning under a fixed government, seem farcical in the mouth of administrators of all epochs and opinions. A saying of the troublous times of yore is still applicable: "The label is changed, but the wine is the same as ever." The public prosecutor, one of the most distinguished legal men under the Empire, attributed the crime to a fixed determination on the part of returned *émigrés* to protest against the sale of their estates. He made the audience shudder at the probable condition of the senator; then he massed together proofs, half-proofs, and probabilities with a cleverness stimulated by a sense that his zeal was certain of its reward, and sat down tranquilly to await the fire of his opponents.

Monsieur de Grandville never argued but this one criminal case ; and it made his reputation. In the first place, he spoke with the same glowing eloquence which to-day we admire in Berryer. He was profoundly convinced of the innocence of his clients, and that in itself is a most powerful auxiliary of speech. The following are the chief points of his defence, which was reported in full by all the leading newspapers of the period. In the first place he exhibited the character and life of Michu in its true light. He made it a noble tale, ringing with lofty sentiments, and it awakened the sympathies of many. When Michu heard himself vindicated by that eloquent voice, tears sprang from his yellow eyes and rolled down his terrible face. He appeared then for what he really was, — a man as simple and as wily as a child ; a being whose whole existence had but one thought, one aim. He was suddenly explained to the minds of all present, more especially by his tears, which produced a great effect upon the jury. His able defender seized that moment of strong interest to enter upon a discussion of the charges : —

“ Where is the body of the person abducted ? Where is the senator ? ” he asked. “ You accuse us of walling him up with stones and plaster. If so, we alone know where he is ; you have kept us twenty-three days in prison, and the senator must be dead by this time for want of food. We are therefore murderers, but you

have not accused us of murder. On the other hand, if he still lives, we must have accomplices. If we have them, and if the senator is living, we should assuredly have set him at liberty. The scheme in relation to Gondreville which you attribute to us is a failure, and only aggravates our position uselessly. We might perhaps obtain a pardon for an abortive attempt by releasing our victim; instead of that we persist in detaining a man from whom we can obtain no benefit whatever. It is absurd! Take away your plaster; the effect is a failure," he said, addressing the public prosecutor. "We are either idiotic criminals (which you do not believe) or the innocent victims of circumstances as inexplicable to us as they are to you. You ought rather to search for the mass of papers which were burned at Gondreville, which will reveal motives stronger far than yours or ours and put you on the track of the causes of this abduction."

The speaker discussed these hypotheses with marvellous ability. He dwelt on the moral character of the witnesses for the defence, whose religious faith was a living one, who believed in a future life and in eternal punishment. He rose to grandeur in this part of his speech and moved his hearers deeply: —

"Remember!" he said; "these criminals were tranquilly dining when told of the abduction of the senator. When the officer of gendarmes intimated to them the

best means of ending the whole affair by giving up the senator, they refused, for they did not understand what was asked of them ! ”

Then, reverting to the mystery of the matter, he declared that its solution was in the hands of time, which would eventually reveal the injustice of the charge. Once on this ground, he boldly and ingeniously supposed himself a juror ; related his deliberations with his colleagues ; imagined his distress lest, having condemned the innocent, the error should be known too late, and drew such a picture of his remorse, dwelling on the grave doubts which the case presented, that he brought the jury to a condition of intense anxiety.

Juries were not in those days so blasé to this sort of allocution as they are now ; Monsieur de Grandville's appeal had the power of things new, and the jurors were evidently shaken. After this passionate outburst they had to listen to the wily and specious prosecutor, who went over the whole case, brought out the darkest points against the prisoners and made the rest inexplicable. His aim was to reach the minds and the reasoning faculties of his hearers just as Monsieur de Grandville had aimed at the heart and the imagination. The latter, however, had seriously entangled the convictions of the jury, and the public prosecutor found his well-laid arguments ineffectual. This was so plain that the counsel for the Messieurs d'Hauteserre and

Gothard appealed to the judgment of the jury, asking that the case against their clients be abandoned. The prosecutor demanded a postponement till the next day in order that he might prepare an answer. Bordin, who saw acquittal in the eyes of the jury if they deliberated on the case at once, opposed the delay of even one night by arguments of legal right and justice to his innocent clients; but in vain, — the court allowed it.

“The interests of society are as great as those of the accused,” said the president. “The court would be lacking in equity if it denied a like request when made by the defence; it ought therefore to grant that of the prosecution.”

“All is luck or ill-luck!” said Bordin to his clients when the session was over. “Almost acquitted to-night you may be condemned to-morrow.”

“In either case,” said the elder de Simeuse, “we can only admire your skill.”

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne’s eyes were full of tears. After the doubts and fears of the counsel for the defence, she had not expected this success. Those around her congratulated her and predicted the acquittal of her cousins. But alas! the matter was destined to end in a startling and almost theatrical event, the most unexpected and disastrous circumstance which ever changed the face of a criminal trial.

At five in the morning of the day after Monsieur de

Grandville's speech, the senator was found on the high road to Troyes, delivered from captivity during his sleep, unaware of the trial that was going on or of the excitement attaching to his name in Europe, and simply happy in being once more able to breathe the fresh air. The man who was the pivot of the drama was quite as amazed at what was now told to him as the persons who met him making his way to Troyes were astounded at his reappearance. A farmer lent him a carriage and he soon reached the house of the prefect at Troyes. The prefect notified the director of the jury, the commissary of the government, and the public prosecutor, who, after a statement made to them by Malin, arrested Marthe, while she was still in bed at the Durieus' house in the suburbs. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, who was only at liberty under bail, was also snatched from one of the few hours of slumber she had been able to obtain at rare intervals in the course of her ceaseless anxiety, and taken to the prefecture to undergo an examination. An order to keep the accused from holding any communication with each other or with their counsel was sent to the prison. At ten o'clock the crowd which assembled around the courtroom were informed that the trial was postponed until one o'clock in the afternoon of the same day.

This change of hour, following on the news of the senator's deliverance, Marthe's arrest, and that of

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, together with the denial of the right to communicate with the prisoners carried terror to the hôtel de Chargebœuf. The whole town and the spectators who had come to Troyes to be present at the trial, the short-hand writers for the daily journals, even the populace were in a ferment which can readily be imagined. The Abbé Goujet came at ten o'clock to see Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the counsel for the defence, who were breakfasting — as well as they could under the circumstances. The abbé took Bordin and Monsieur Grandville apart, told them what Marthe had confided to him the day before, and gave them the fragment of the letter she had received. The two lawyers exchanged a look, after which Bordin said to the abbé: "Not a word of all this! The case is lost; but at any rate let us show a firm front."

Marthe was not strong enough to evade the cross-questioning of the director of the jury and the public prosecutor. Moreover the proof against her was too overwhelming. Lechesneau had sent for the under crust of the last loaf of bread she had carried to the cavern, also for the empty bottles and various other articles. During the senator's long hours of captivity he had formed conjectures in his own mind and had looked for indications which might put him on the track of his enemies. These he now communicated to the

authorities. Michu's farmhouse, lately built, had, he supposed, a new oven; the tiles or bricks on which the bread was baked would show their jointed lines on the bottom of the loaves, and thus afford a proof that the bread supplied to him was baked in that particular oven. So with the wine brought in bottles sealed with green wax, which would probably be found identical with other bottles in Michu's cellar. These shrewd observations, which Malin imparted to the justice of peace, who made the first examination (taking Marthe with him), led to the results foreseen by the senator.

Marthe, deceived by the apparent friendliness of Lechesneau and the public prosecutor, who assured her that complete confession could alone save her husband's life, admitted that the cavern where the senator had been hidden was known only to her husband and the Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, and that she herself had taken provisions to the senator on three separate occasions at midnight.

Laurence, questioned about the cavern, was forced to acknowledge that Michu had discovered it and had shown it to her at the time when the four young men evaded the police and were hidden in it.

As soon as these preliminary examinations were ended, the jury, lawyers, and audience were notified that the trial would be resumed. At three o'clock the president opened the session by announcing that the case



would be continued under a new aspect. He exhibited to Michu three bottles of wine and asked him if he recognized them as bottles from his own cellar, showing him at the same time the identity between the green wax on two empty bottles with the green wax on a full bottle taken from his cellar that morning by the justice of peace in presence of his wife. Michu refused to recognize anything as his own. But these proofs for the prosecution were understood by the jurors, to whom the president explained that the empty bottles were found in the place where the senator was imprisoned.

Each prisoner was questioned as to the cavern or cellar beneath the ruins of the old monastery. It was proved by all witnesses for the prosecution, and also for the defence, that the existence of this hiding-place discovered by Michu was known only to him and his wife, and to Laurence and the four gentlemen. We may judge of the effect in the courtroom when the public prosecutor made known the fact that this cavern, known only to the accused and to their two witnesses, was the place where the senator had been imprisoned.

Marthe was summoned. Her appearance caused much excitement among the spectators and keen anxiety to the prisoners. Monsieur de Grandville rose to protest against the testimony of a wife against her husband. The public prosecutor replied that Marthe by her own confession was an accomplice in the outrage; that she

had neither sworn nor testified, and was to be heard solely in the interests of truth. .

“We need only submit her preliminary examination to the jury,” remarked the president, who now ordered the clerk of the court to read the said testimony aloud.

“Do you now confirm your own statement?” said the president, addressing Marthe.

Michu looked at his wife, and Marthe, who saw her fatal error, fainted away and fell to the floor. It may be truly said that a thunderbolt had fallen upon the prisoners and their counsel.

“I never wrote to my wife from prison, and I know none of the persons employed there,” said Michu.

Bordin passed to him the fragments of the letter Marthe had received. Michu gave but one glance at it. “My writing has been imitated,” he said.

“Denial is your last resource,” said the public prosecutor.

The senator was introduced into the courtroom with all the ceremonies due to his position. His entrance was like a stage scene. Malin (now called Comte de Gondreville, without regard to the feelings of the late owners of the property) was requested by the president to look at the prisoners, and did so with great attention and for a long time. He stated that the clothing of his abductors was exactly like that worn by the four gentlemen; but he declared that the trouble of his mind had been

such that he could not be positive that the accused were really the guilty parties.

“More than that,” he said, “it is my conviction that these four gentlemen had nothing to do with it. The hands that blindfolded me in the forest were coarse and rough. I should rather suppose,” he added, looking at Michu, “that my old enemy took charge of that duty; but I beg the gentlemen of the jury not to give too much weight to this remark. My suspicions are very slight, and I feel no certainty whatever — for this reason. The two men who seized me put me on horseback behind the man who had blindfolded me, and whose hair was red like Michu’s. However singular you may consider the observation I am about to make, it is necessary to make it because it is the ground of an opinion favorable to the accused — who, I hope, will not feel offended by it. Fastened to the man’s back I would naturally have been affected by his odor — yet I did not perceive that which is peculiar to Michu. As to the person who brought me provisions on three several occasions, I am certain it was Marthe, the wife of Michu. I recognized her the first time she came by a ring she always wore, which she had forgotten to remove. The Court and jury will please allow for the contradictions which appear in the facts I have stated, which I myself am wholly unable to reconcile.”

A murmur of approval followed this testimony. Bor-

din asked permission of the Court to address a few questions to the witness.

“Does the senator think that his abduction was due to other causes than the interests respecting property which the prosecution attributes to the prisoners?”

“I do” replied the senator, “but I am wholly ignorant of what the real motives were; for during a captivity of twenty days I saw and heard no one.”

“Do you think,” said the public prosecutor, “that your château at Gondreville contains information, title-deeds, or other papers of value which would induce a search on the part of the Messieurs de Simeuse?”

“I do not think so,” replied Malin; “I believe those gentlemen to be incapable of attempting to get possession of such papers by violence. They had only to ask me for them to obtain them.”

“You burned certain papers in the park, did you not?” said Monsieur de Grandville, abruptly.

Malin looked at Grévin. After exchanging a rapid glance with the notary, which Bordin intercepted, he replied that he had not burned any papers. The public prosecutor having asked him to describe the ambush to which he had so nearly fallen a victim two years earlier, the senator replied that he had seen Michu watching him from the fork of a tree. This answer, which agreed with Grévin’s testimony, produced a great impression.

The four gentlemen remained impassible during the examination of their enemy, who seemed determined to overwhelm them with generosity. Laurence suffered horrible agony. From time to time the Marquis de Chargebœuf held her by the arm, fearing she might dart forward to the rescue. The Comte de Gondreville retired from the courtroom and as he did so he bowed to the four gentlemen, who did not return the salutation. This trifling matter made the jury indignant.

“They are lost now,” whispered Bordin to the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

“Alas, yes! and always through the nobility of their sentiments,” replied the marquis.

“My task is now only too easy, gentlemen,” said the prosecutor, rising to address the jury.

He explained the use of the cement by the necessity of securing an iron frame on which to fasten a padlock which held the iron bar with which the gate of the cavern was closed; a description of which was given in the *procès-verbal* made that morning by Pigoult. He put the falsehoods of the accused into the strongest light, and pulverized the arguments of the defence with the new evidence so miraculously obtained. In 1806 France was still too near the Supreme Being of 1793 to talk about divine justice; he therefore spared the jury all reference to the intervention of heaven; but he said that earthly justice would be on the watch for the

mysterious accomplices who had set the senator at liberty, and he sat down, confidently awaiting the verdict.

The jury believed there was a mystery, but they were all persuaded that it came from the prisoners, who were probably concealing some matter of a private interest of great importance to them.

Monsieur de Grandville, to whom a plot or machination of some kind was quite evident, rose; but he seemed discouraged, — less, however, by the new evidence than by the manifest opinion of the jury. He surpassed, if anything, his speech of the previous evening; his argument was more compact and logical; but he felt his fervor repelled by the coldness of the jury; he spoke ineffectually, and he knew it, — a chilling situation for an advocate. He called attention to the fact that the release of the senator, as if by magic and clearly without the aid of any of the accused or of Marthe, corroborated his previous argument. Yesterday the prisoners could most assuredly rely on acquittal, and if they had, as the prosecution claimed, the power to hold or to release the senator, they certainly would not have released him until after their acquittal. He endeavored to bring before the minds of the Court and jury the fact that mysterious enemies, undiscovered as yet, could alone have struck the accused this final blow.

Strange to say, the only minds Monsieur de Grandville reached with this argument were those of the public prosecutor and the judges. The jury listened perfunctorily; the audience, usually so favorable to prisoners, were convinced of their guilt. In a court of justice the sentiments of the crowd do unquestionably weigh upon the judges and the jury, and *vice versa*. Seeing this condition of the minds about him, which could be felt if not defined, the counsel uttered his last words in a tone of passionate excitement caused by his conviction. —

“In the name of the accused,” he cried, “I forgive you for the fatal error you are about to commit, and which nothing can repair! We are the victims of some mysterious and machiavelian power. Marthe Michu was inveigled by vile perfidy. You will discover this too late, when the evil you now do will be irreparable.”

Bordin simply claimed the acquittal of the prisoners on the testimony of the senator himself.

The president summed up the case with all the more impartiality because it was evident that the minds of the jurors were already made up. He even turned the scales in favor of the prisoners by dwelling on the senator's evidence. This clemency, however, did not in the least endanger the success of the prosecution. At eleven o'clock that night, after the jury had replied

through their foreman to the usual questions, the Court condemned Michu to death, the Messieurs de Simeuse to twenty-four years' and the Messieurs d'Hauteserre to ten years, penal servitude at hard labor. Gothard was acquitted.

The whole audience was eager to observe the bearing of the five guilty men in this supreme moment of their lives. The four gentlemen looked at Laurence, who returned them, with dry eyes, the ardent look of the martyrs.

"She would have wept had we been acquitted," said the younger de Simeuse to his brother.

Never did convicted men meet an unjust fate with serener brows or countenances more worthy of their manhood than these five victims of a cruel plot.

"Our counsel has forgiven you," said the eldest de Simeuse to the Court.

Madame d'Hauteserre fell ill, and was three months in her bed at the hôtel de Chargeboeuf. Monsieur d'Hauteserre returned patiently to Cinq-Cygne, inwardly gnawed by one of those sorrows of old age which have none of youth's distractions; often he was so absent-minded that the abbé, who watched him, knew the poor father was living over again the scene of the fatal verdict. Marthe passed away from all blame; she died three weeks after the condemnation



of her husband, confiding her son to Laurence, in whose arms she died.

The trial once over, political events of the utmost importance effaced even the memory of it, and nothing further was discovered. Society is like the ocean; it returns to its level and its specious calmness after a disaster, effacing all traces of it in the tide of its eager interests.

Without her natural firmness of mind and her knowledge of her cousins' innocence, Laurence would have succumbed; but she gave fresh proof of the grandeur of her character; she astonished Monsieur de Grandville and Bordin by the apparent serenity which these terrible misfortunes called forth in her noble soul. She nursed Madame d'Hauteserre and went daily to the prison, saying openly that she would marry one of her cousins when they were taken to the galleys.

"To the galleys!" cried Bordin, "Mademoiselle! our first endeavor must be to wring their pardon from the Emperor."

"Their pardon! — *from a Bonaparte?*" cried Laurence in horror.

The spectacles of the old lawyer jumped from his nose; he caught them as they fell and looked at the young girl who was now indeed a woman; he understood her character at last in all its bearings; then he took the arm of the Marquis de Chargebœuf, saying: —

“ Monsieur le Marquis, let us go to Paris instantly and save them without her ! ”

The appeal of the Messieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre and that of Michu was the first case to be brought before the new court. Its decision was fortunately delayed by the ceremonies attending its installation.

## XIX.

## THE EMPEROR'S BIVOUAC.

TOWARDS the end of September, after three sessions of the Court of Appeals in which the lawyers for the defence pleaded, and the attorney-general Merlin himself spoke for the prosecution, the appeal was rejected. The Imperial Court of Paris was by this time instituted. Monsieur de Grandville was appointed assistant attorney-general, and the department of the Aube coming under the jurisdiction of this court, it became possible for him to take certain steps in favor of the convicted prisoners, among them that of importuning Cambacérès, his protector. Bordin and Monsieur de Chargebœuf came to his house in the Marais the day after the appeal was rejected, where they found him in the midst of his honeymoon, for he had married in the interval. In spite of all these changes in his condition, Monsieur de Chargebœuf saw very plainly that the young lawyer was faithful to his late clients. Certain lawyers, the artists of their profession, treat their causes like mistresses. This is rare, however, and must not be depended on.

As soon as they were alone in his study, Monsieur de Grandville said to the marquis: "I have not

waited for your visit; I have already employed all my influence. Don't attempt to save Michu; if you do, you cannot obtain the pardon of the Messieurs de Simeuse. The law will insist on one victim."

"Good God!" cried Bordin, showing the young magistrate the three petitions for mercy; "how can I take upon myself to withdraw the application for that man. If I suppress that paper I cut off his head."

He held out the petition; de Grandville took it, looked it over, and said: —

"We can't suppress it; but be sure of one thing, if you ask all you will obtain nothing."

"Have we time to consult Michu?" asked Bordin.

"Yes. The order for execution comes from the office of the attorney-general; I will see that you have some days. We kill men," he said, with some bitterness, "but at least we do it formally, especially in Paris."

Monsieur de Chargebœuf had already received from the chief justice certain information which added weight to these sad words of Monsieur de Grandville.

"Michu is innocent, I know," continued the young lawyer, "but what can we do against so many? Remember, too, that my present influence depends on my keeping silent. I must order the scaffold to be prepared, or my late client is certain to be beheaded."

Monsieur de Chargebœuf knew Laurence well enough to be certain she would never consent to save her

cousins at the expense of Michu ; he therefore resolved on making one more effort. He asked an audience of the minister of foreign affairs to learn if salvation could be looked for through the influence of the great diplomat. He took Bordin with him, for the latter knew the minister and had done him some service. The two old men found Talleyrand sitting with his feet stretched out, absorbed in contemplation of his fire, his head resting on his hand, his elbow on the table, a newspaper lying at his feet. The minister had just read the decision of the Court of Appeals.

“ Pray sit down, Monsieur le marquis,” said Talleyrand, “ and you, Bordin,” he added, pointing to a place at the table, “ write as follows : —

SIRE, — Four innocent gentlemen, declared guilty by a jury have just had their condemnation confirmed by your Court of Appeals.

Your Imperial Majesty can now only pardon them. These gentlemen ask this pardon of your august clemency, in the hope that they may enter your army and meet their death in battle before your eyes ; and thus praying, they are, of your Imperial and Royal Majesty, with reverence, etc.

“ None but princes can do such prompt and graceful kindness,” said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking the precious draft of the petition from the hands of Bordin that he might have it signed by the four gentlemen ; resolving in his own mind that he would also obtain the signatures of several august names.

“The life of your young relatives, Monsieur le marquis,” said the minister, “now depends on the turn of a battle. Endeavor to reach the Emperor on the morning after a victory and they are saved.”

He took a pen and himself wrote a private and confidential letter to the Emperor, and another of ten lines to Maréchal Duroc. Then he rang the bell, asked his secretary for a diplomatic passport, and said tranquilly to the old lawyer, “What is your honest opinion of that trial?”

“Do you know, monseigneur, who was at the bottom of this cruel wrong?”

“I presume I do; but I have reasons to wish for certainty,” replied Talleyrand. “Return to Troyes; bring me the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, here, to-morrow at the same hour, but secretly; ask to be ushered into Madame de Talleyrand’s salon; I will tell her you are coming. If Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, who shall be placed where she can see a man who will be standing before me, recognizes that man as an individual who came to her house during the conspiracy of de Polignac and Rivière, tell her to remember that, no matter what I say or what he answers me, she must not utter a word nor make a gesture. One thing more, think only of saving the de Simeuse brothers; don’t embarrass yourself with that scoundrel of a bailiff —”

“A sublime man, monseigneur!” exclaimed Bordin.

“Enthusiasm! in you, Bordin! The man must be remarkable. Our sovereign has an immense self-love, *Monsieur le marquis*,” he said, changing the conversation. “He is about to dismiss me that he may commit follies without warning. The Emperor is a great soldier who can change the laws of time and distance, but he cannot change men; yet he persists in trying to run them in his own mould! Now, remember this; the young men’s pardon can be obtained by one person only — *Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne*.”

The marquis went alone to Troyes and told the whole matter to Laurence. She obtained permission from the authorities to see Michu, and the marquis accompanied her to the gates of the prison, where he waited for her. When she came out her face was bathed in tears.

“Poor man!” she said; “he tried to kneel to me, praying that I would not think of him, and forgetting the shackles that were on his feet! Ah, marquis, I *will* plead his cause. Yes, I’ll kiss the boot of their Emperor. If I fail — well, the memory of that man shall live eternally honored in our family. Present his petition for mercy so as to gain time; meantime I am resolved to have his portrait. Come, let us go.”

The next day, when Talleyrand was informed by a sign agreed upon that Laurence was at her post, he rang the bell; his orderly came to him, and received orders to admit *Monsieur Corentin*.

“My friend, you are a very clever fellow,” said Talleyrand, “and I wish to employ you.”

“Monseigneur —”

“Listen. In serving Fouché you will get money, but never honor nor any position you can acknowledge. But in serving me, as you have lately done at Berlin, you can win credit and repute.”

“Monseigneur is very good.”

“You displayed genius in that late affair at Gondreville.”

“To what does Monseigneur allude?” said Corentin, with a manner that was neither too reserved nor too surprised.

“Ah, Monsieur!” observed the minister, dryly, “you will never make a successful man; you fear —”

“What, monseigneur?”

“Death!” replied Talleyrand, in his fine, deep voice. “Adieu, my good friend.”

“That is the man,” said the Marquis de Chargebœuf entering the room after Corentin was dismissed; “but we have nearly killed the countess.”

“He is the only man I know capable of playing such a trick,” replied the minister. “Monsieur le marquis, you are in danger of not succeeding in your mission. Start ostensibly for Strasburg; I’ll send you double passports in blank to be filled out. Provide yourself with substitutes; change your route and above all your



carriage; let your substitutes go on to Strasburg, and do you reach Prussia through Switzerland and Bavaria. Not a word — prudence! The police are against you; and you do not know what the police are —”

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne offered the then celebrated Robert Lefebvre a sufficient sum to induce him to go to Troyes and take Michu's portrait. Monsieur de Grandville promised to afford the painter every possible facility. Monsieur de Chargebœuf then started in the old *berlingot*, with Laurence and a servant who spoke German. Not far from Nancy they overtook Mademoiselle Goujet and Gothard, who had preceded them in an excellent carriage, which the marquis took, giving them in exchange the *berlingot*.

Talleyrand was right. At Strasburg the commissary-general of police refused to countersign the passport of the travellers, and gave them positive orders to return. By that time the marquis and Laurence were leaving France by way of Besançon with the diplomatic passport.

Laurence crossed Switzerland in the first days of October, without paying the slightest attention to that glorious land. She lay back in the carriage in the torpor which overtakes a criminal on the eve of his execution. To her eyes all nature was shrouded in a seething vapor; even common things assumed fantastic shapes. The one thought, “If I do not succeed they will kill them-

selves," fell upon her soul with reiterated blows, as the bar of the executioner fell upon the victim's members when tortured on the wheel. She felt herself breaking; she lost her energy in this terrible waiting for the cruel moment, short and decisive, when she should find herself face to face with that man on whom the fate of the condemned depended. She chose to yield to her depression rather than waste her strength uselessly. The marquis, who was incapable of understanding this resolve of firm minds, which often assumes quite diverse aspects (for in such moments of tension certain superior minds give way to surprising gayety), began to fear that he might never bring Laurence alive to the momentous interview, solemn to them only, and yet beyond the ordinary limits of private life. To Laurence, the necessity of humiliating herself before that man, the object of her hatred and contempt, meant the sacrifice of all her noblest feelings.

"After this," she said, "the Laurence who survives will bear no likeness to her who is now to perish."

The travellers could not fail to be aware of the vast movement of men and material which surrounded them the moment they entered Prussia. The campaign of Jena had just begun. Laurence and the marquis beheld the magnificent divisions of the French army deploying and parading as if at the Tuileries. In this display of military power, which can be adequately described only

with the words and images of the Bible, the proportions of the Man whose spirit moved these masses grew gigantic to Laurence's imagination. Soon, the cry of victory resounded in her ears. The Imperial arms had just obtained two signal advantages. The Prince of Prussia had been killed the evening before the day on which the travellers arrived at Saalfeld in their endeavor to overtake Napoleon, who was marching with the rapidity of lightning.

At last, on the 13th of October (date of ill-omen) Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was skirting a river in the midst of the Grand Army, seeing nought but confusion, sent hither and thither from one village to another, from division to division, frightened at finding herself alone with one old man tossed about in an ocean of a hundred and fifty thousand armed men facing a hundred and fifty thousand more. Weary of watching the river through the hedges of the muddy road which she was following along a hillside, she asked its name of a passing soldier.

"That's the Saale," he said, showing her the Prussian army, grouped in great masses on the other side of the stream.

Night came on. Laurence beheld the camp-fires lighted and the glitter of stacked arms. The old marquis, whose courage was chivalric, drove the horses himself (two strong beasts bought the evening before),

his servant sitting beside him. He knew very well he should find neither horses nor postilions within the lines of the army. Suddenly the bold equipage, an object of great astonishment to the soldiers, was stopped by a gendarme of the military gendarmerie, who galloped up to the carriage, calling out to the marquis: "Who are you? where are you going? what do you want?"

"The Emperor," replied the Marquis de Chargebœuf; "I have an important dispatch for the Grand-maréchal Duroc."

"Well, you can't stay here," said the gendarme.

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the marquis were, however, compelled to remain where they were on account of the darkness.

"Where are we?" she asked, stopping two officers whom she saw passing, whose uniforms were concealed by cloth overcoats.

"You are among the advanced guard of the French army," answered one of the officers. "You cannot stay here, for if the enemy makes a movement and the artillery opens you will be between two fires."

"Ah!" she said, with an indifferent air.

Hearing that "*Ah!*" the other officer turned and said: "How did that woman come here?"

"We are waiting," said Laurence, "for a gendarme who has gone to find General Duroc, a protector who will enable us to speak to the Emperor."

“Speak to the Emperor!” exclaimed the first officer; “how can you think of such a thing — on the eve of a decisive battle?”

“True,” she said; “I ought to speak to him on the morrow — victory would make him kind.”

The two officers stationed themselves at a little distance and sat motionless on their horses. The carriage was now surrounded by a mass of generals, marshals, and other officers, all extremely brilliant in appearance, who appeared to pay deference to the carriage merely because it was there.

“Good God!” said the marquis to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne; “I am afraid you spoke to the Emperor.”

“The Emperor?” said a colonel, beside them, “why there he is!” pointing to the officer who had said, “How did that woman get here?” He was mounted on a white horse, richly caparisoned, and wore the celebrated gray top-coat over his green uniform. He was scanning with a field-glass the Prussian army massed beyond the Saale. Laurence understood then why the carriage remained there, and why the Emperor’s escort respected it. She was seized with a convulsive tremor — the hour had come! She heard the heavy sound of the tramp of men and the clang of their arms as they arrived at a quick step on the plateau. The batteries had a language, the caissons thundered, the brass glittered.

"Maréchal Lannes will take position with his whole corps in the advance; Maréchal Lefebvre and the Guard will occupy this hill," said the other officer, who was Major-general Berthier.

The Emperor dismounted. At his first motion Roustan, his famous mameluk, hastened to hold his horse. Laurence was stupefied with amazement; she had never dreamed of such simplicity.

"I shall pass the night on the plateau," said the Emperor.

Just then the Grand-maréchal Duroc, whom the gendarme had finally found, came up to the Marquis de Chargeboeuf and asked the reason of his coming. The marquis replied that a letter from the Prince de Talleyrand, of which he was bearer, would explain to the marshal how urgent it was that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and himself should obtain an audience of the Emperor.

"His Majesty will no doubt dine at his bivouac," said Duroc, taking the letter, "and when I find out what your object is, I will let you know if you can see him. Corporal," he said to the gendarme, "accompany this carriage, and take it close to that hut at the rear."

Monsieur de Chargeboeuf followed the gendarme and stopped his horses behind a miserable cabin, built of mud and branches, surrounded by a few fruit-trees, and guarded by pickets of infantry and cavalry.

It may be said that the majesty of war appeared here in all its grandeur. From this height the lines of the two armies were visible in the moonlight. After an hour's waiting, the time being occupied by the incessant coming and going of the aides-de-camp, Duroc himself came for Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the marquis, and made them enter the hut, the floor of which was of battened earth like that of a stable.

Before a table with the remains of dinner, and before a fire made of green wood which smoked, Napoleon was seated in a clumsy chair. His muddy boots gave evidence of a long tramp across country. He had taken off the famous top-coat; and his equally famous green uniform, crossed by the red cordon of the Legion of honor and heightened by the white of his kersey-mere breeches and of his waistcoat, brought out vividly his pale and terrible Cæsarian face. One hand was on a map which lay unfolded on his knees. Berthier stood near him in the brilliant uniform of the vice-constable of the Empire. Constant, the valet, was offering the Emperor his coffee from a tray.

"What do you want?" said Napoleon, with a show of roughness, darting his eye like a flash through Laurence's head. "You are no longer afraid to speak to me before the battle? What is it about?"

"Sire," she said, looking at him with as firm an eye, "I am Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

"Well?" he replied, in an angry voice, thinking her look braved him.

"Do you not understand? I am the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, come to ask mercy," she said, falling on her knees and holding out to him the petition drawn up by Talleyrand, endorsed by the Empress, by Cambacérès and by Malin.

The Emperor raised her graciously, and said with a keen look: "Have you come to your senses? Do you now understand what the French Empire is and must be?"

"Ah! at this moment I understand only the Emperor," she said, vanquished by the kindly manner with which the man of destiny had said the words that foretold to her ears success.

"Are they innocent?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes, all of them," she said with enthusiasm.

"All? No, that bailiff is a dangerous man, who would have killed my senator without taking your advice."

"Ah, Sire," she said, "if you had a friend devoted to you, would you abandon him? Would you not rather —"

"You are a woman," he said, interrupting her in a faint tone of ridicule.

"And you, a man of iron!" she replied with a passionate sternness which pleased him.



"That man has been condemned to death by the laws of his country," he continued.

"But he is innocent!"

"Child!" he said.

He took Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne by the hand and led her from the hut to the plateau.

"See," he continued, with that eloquence of his which changed even cowards to brave men, "see those three hundred thousand men — all innocent. And yet to-morrow thirty thousand of them will be lying dead, dead for their country! Among those Prussians there is, perhaps, some great mathematician, a man of genius, an idealist, who will be mown down. On our side we shall assuredly lose many a great man never known to fame. Perhaps even I shall see my best friend die. Shall I blame God? No. I shall bear it silently. Learn from this, mademoiselle, that a man must die for the laws of his country just as men die here for her glory." So saying, he led her back into the hut. "Return to France," he said, looking at the marquis; "my orders shall follow you."

Laurence believed in a commutation of Michu's punishment, and in her gratitude she knelt again before the Emperor and kissed his hand.

"You are the Marquis de Chargeboeuf?" said Napoleon, addressing the marquis.

"Yes, Sire."

“ You have children ? ”

“ Many children . ”

“ Why not give me one of your grandsons ? he shall be my page . ”

“ Ah ! ” thought Laurence, “ there’s the sub-lieutenant after all ; he wants to be paid for his mercy . ”

The marquis bowed without replying. Happily at this moment General Rapp rushed into the hut.

“ Sire, the cavalry of the Guard, and that of the Grand-duc de Berg cannot be up before midday to-morrow . ”

“ Never mind , ” said Napoleon, turning to Berthier, “ we, too, get our reprieves ; let us profit by them . ”

At a sign of his hand the marquis and Laurence retired and again entered their carriage ; the corporal showed them their road and accompanied them to a village where they passed the night. The next day they left the field of battle behind them, followed by the thunder of the cannon, — eight hundred pieces, — which pursued them for ten hours. While still on their way they learned of the amazing victory of Jena.

Eight days later, they were driving through the faubourg of Troyes, where they learned that an order of the chief justice, transmitted through the *procureur impérial* of Troyes, commanded the release of the four gentlemen on bail during the Emperor’s pleasure. But Michu’s sentence was confirmed, and the warrant for his

execution had been forwarded from the ministry of police. These orders had reached Troyes that very morning. Laurence went at once to the prison, though it was two in the morning, and obtained permission to stay with Michu, who was about to undergo the melancholy ceremony called "the toilet." The good abbé, who had asked permission to accompany him to the scaffold, had just given absolution to the man, whose only distress in dying was his uncertainty as to the fate of his young masters. When Laurence entered his cell he uttered a cry of joy.

"I can die now," he said.

"They are pardoned," she said; "I do not know on what conditions, but they are pardoned. I did all I could for you, dear friend — against the advice of others. I thought I had saved you; but the Emperor deceived me with his graciousness."

"It was written above," said Michu, "that the watch-dog should be killed on the spot where his old masters died."

The last hour passed rapidly. Michu, at the moment of parting, asked to kiss her hand, but Laurence held her cheek to the lips of the noble victim that he might sacredly kiss it. Michu refused to mount the cart.

"Innocent men should go afoot," he said.

He would not let the abbé give him his arm; resolutely and with dignity he walked alone to the scaffold

As he laid his head on the plank he said to the executioner, after asking him to turn down the collar of his coat, "My clothes belong to you; try not to spot them."

The four gentlemen had scarcely time to even see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. An orderly of the general commanding the division to which they were assigned, brought them their commissions as sub-lieutenants in the same regiment of cavalry, with orders to proceed at once to Bayonne, the base of supplies for its particular army-corps. After a scene of heart-rending farewells, for they all foreboded what the future should bring forth, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne returned to her desolate home.

The two brothers were killed together under the eyes of the Emperor at Sommo-Sierra, the one defending the other, both being already in command of their troop. The last words of each were, "*Laurence, cy leurs!*"

The elder d'Hauteserre died a colonel at the attack on the redoubt at Moscow, where his brother took his place.

Adrien d'Hauteserre, appointed brigadier-general at the battle of Dresden, was dangerously wounded there and was sent to Cinq-Cygne for proper nursing. While endeavoring to save this relic of the four gentlemen

who for a few brief months had been so happy around her, Laurence, then thirty-two years of age, married him. She offered him a withered heart, but he accepted it; those who truly love doubt nothing or doubt all.

The Restoration found Laurence without enthusiasm. The Bourbons returned too late for her. Nevertheless, she had no cause for complaint. Her husband, made peer of France with the title of Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, became lieutenant-general in 1816, and was rewarded with the blue ribbon for the eminent services which he then performed.

Michu's son, of whom Laurence took care as though he were her own child, was admitted to the bar in 1817. After practising two years he was made assistant-judge at the court of Alençon, and from there he became *procureur-du-roi* at Arcis in 1827. Laurence, who had also taken charge of Michu's property, made over to the young man on the day of his majority an investment in the public Funds which yielded him an income of twelve thousand francs a year. Later, she arranged a marriage for him with Mademoiselle Girel, an heiress at Troyes.

The Marquis de Cinq-Cygne died in 1829, in the arms of his wife, surrounded by his father and mother, and his children who adored him. At the time of his death no one had ever fathomed the mystery of the senator's

abduction. Louis XVIII. did not neglect to repair, as far as possible, the wrongs done by that affair ; but he was silent as to the causes of the disaster. From that time forth the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne believed him to have been an accomplice in the catastrophe.

## XX.

## THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

THE late Marquis de Cinq-Cygne had used his savings, as well as those of his father and mother, in the purchase of a fine house in the rue du Faubourg-du-Roule, entailing it on heirs male for the support of the title. The sordid economy of the marquis and his parents, which had often troubled Laurence, was then explained. After this purchase the marquise, who lived at Cinq-Cygne and economized on her own account for her children, spent her winters in Paris, — all the more willingly because her daughter Berthe and her son Paul were now of an age when their education required the resources of Paris.

Madame de Cinq-Cygne went but little into society. Her husband could not be ignorant of the regrets which lay in her tender heart; but he showed her always the most exquisite delicacy, and died having loved no other woman. This noble soul, not fully understood for a period of time but to which the generous daughter of the Cinq-Cygnés returned in his last years as true a love as that he gave to her, was completely happy in his married life. Laurence lived for the joys of home.

No woman in Paris has ever been more cherished by her friends or more respected. To be received in her house is an honor. Gentle, indulgent, intellectual, above all things simple and natural, she pleases choice souls and draws them to her in spite of her saddened aspect; each longs to protect this woman, inwardly so strong, and that sentiment of secret protection counts for much in the wondrous charm of her friendship. Her life, so painful during her youth, is beautiful and serene towards evening. Her sufferings are known, and no one asks who was the original of that portrait by Lefebvre which is the chief and sacred ornament of her salon. Her face has the maturity of fruits that have ripened slowly; a hallowed pride dignifies that long-trying brow.

At the period when the marquise came to Paris to open the new house, her fortune, increased by the law of indemnities, gave her some two hundred thousand francs a year, not counting her husband's salary; besides this, Laurence had inherited the money guarded by Michu for his young masters. From that time forth she made a practice of spending half her income and of laying by the rest for her daughter Berthe.

Berthe is the living image of her mother, but without her warrior nerve; she is her mother in delicacy, in intellect, — “more a woman,” Laurence says, sadly. The marquise was not willing to marry her daughter



until she was twenty years of age. Her savings, judiciously invested in the Funds by old Monsieur d'Hauteserre at the moment when consols fell in 1830, gave Berthe a dowry of eighty thousand francs a year in 1833, when she was twenty.

About that time the Princesse de Cadignan, who was seeking to marry her son, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, brought him into intimate relations with Madame de Cinq-Cygne. Georges de Maufrigneuse dined with the marquise three times a week, accompanied the mother and daughter to the Opera, and curvetted in the Bois around their carriage when they drove out. It was evident to all the world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain that Georges loved Berthe. But no one could discover to a certainty whether Madame de Cinq-Cygne was desirous of making her daughter a duchess, to become a princess later, or whether it was only the princess who coveted for her son the splendid dowry. Did the celebrated Diane court the noble provincial house? and was the daughter of the Cinq-Cygnés frightened by the celebrity of Madame de Cadignan, her tastes and her ruinous extravagance? In her strong desire not to injure her son's prospects the princess grew devout, shut the door on her former life, and spent the summer season at Geneva in a villa on the lake.

One evening there were present in the salon of the Princesse de Cadignan, the Marquise d'Espard, and de

Marsay, then president of the Council (on this occasion the princess saw her former lover for the last time, for he died the following year), Eugène de Rastignac, under-secretary of State attached to de Marsay's ministry, two ambassadors, two celebrated orators from the Chamber of Peers, the old dukes of Lenoncourt and de Navarreins, the Comte de Vandenesse and his young wife, and d'Arthez, — who formed a rather singular circle, the composition of which can be thus explained. The princess was anxious to obtain from the prime minister of the crown a permit for the return of the Prince de Cadignan. De Marsay, who did not choose to take upon himself the responsibility of granting it, came to tell the princess the matter had been entrusted to safe hands, and that a certain political manager had promised to bring her the result in the course of that evening.

Madame and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne were announced. Laurence, whose principles were unyielding, was not only surprised but shocked to see the most illustrious representatives of Legitimacy talking and laughing in a friendly manner with the prime minister of the man whom she never called anything but Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans. De Marsay, like an expiring lamp, shone with a last brilliancy. He laid aside for the moment his political anxieties, and Madame de Cinq-Cygne endured him, as they say the Court of Aus-

trials endured de Saint-Aulaire; the man of the world effaced the minister of the citizen-king. But she rose to her feet as though her chair were of red-hot iron when the name was announced of "Monsieur le Comte de Gondreville."

"Adieu, madame," she said to the princess in a curt tone.

She left the room with Berthe, measuring her steps to avoid encountering that fatal being.

"You may have caused the loss of Georges' marriage," said the princess to de Marsay, in a low voice. "Why did you not tell me your agent's name?"

The former clerk of Arcis, former Conventional, former Thermidorien, tribune, Councillor of State, count of the Empire and senator, peer of the Restoration, and now peer of the monarchy of July, made a servile bow to the princess.

"Fear nothing, madame," he said; "we have ceased to make war on princes. I bring you an assurance of the permit," he added, seating himself beside her.

Malin was long in the confidence of Louis XVIII., to whom his varied experience was useful. He had greatly aided in overthrowing Decazes, and had given much good advice to the ministry of Villèle. Coldly received by Charles X., he had adopted all the rancors of Talleyrand. He was now in high favor under the twelfth government he had served since 1789, and which in turn he

would doubtless betray. For the last fifteen months he had broken the long friendship which had bound him for thirty-six years to our greatest diplomat, the Prince de Talleyrand. It was in the course of this very evening that he made answer to some one who asked why the Prince showed such hostility to the Duc de Bordeaux, "The Pretender is too young!"

"Singular advice to give young men," remarked Rastignac.

De Marsay, who grew thoughtful after Madame de Cadignan's reproachful speech, took no notice of these jests. He looked askance at de Gondreville and was evidently biding his time until that now old man, who went to bed early, had taken leave. All present, who had witnessed the abrupt departure of Madame de Cinq-Cygne (whose reasons were well-known to them), imitated de Marsay's conduct and kept silence. Gondreville, who had not recognized the marquise, was ignorant of the cause of the general reticence, but the habit of dealing with public matters had given him a certain tact; he was moreover a clever man; he saw that his presence was embarrassing to the company and he took leave. De Marsay, standing with his back to the fire, watched the slow departure of the old man in a manner which revealed the gravity of his thoughts.

"I did wrong, madame, not to tell you the name of my negotiator," said the prime minister, listening for

the sound of Malin's wheels as they rolled away. "But I will redeem my fault and give you the means of making your peace with the Cinq-Cygnés. It is now thirty years since the affair I am about to speak of took place; it is as old to the present day as the death of Henri IV. (which between ourselves and in spite of the proverb is still a mystery, like so many other historical catastrophes). I can, however, assure you that even if this affair did not concern Madame de Cinq-Cygne it would be none the less curious and interesting. Moreover, it throws light on a celebrated exploit in our modern annals, — I mean that of the Mont Saint-Bernard. Messieurs les Ambassadeurs," he added, bowing to the two diplomats, "will see that in the element of profound intrigue the political men of the present day are far behind the Machiavellis whom the waves of the popular will lifted, in 1793, above the storm, — some of whom have 'found,' as the old song says, 'a haven.' To be anything in France in these days a man must have been tossed in those tempests."

"It seems to me," said the princess, smiling, "that from that point of view the present state of things under your régime leaves nothing to be desired."

A well-bred laugh went round the room, and even the prime minister himself could not help smiling. The ambassadors seemed impatient for the tale; de Marsay coughed dryly and silence was obtained.

“On a June night in 1800,” began the minister, “about three in the morning, just as daylight was beginning to pale the brilliancy of the wax candles, two men tired of playing at *bouillotte* (or who were playing merely to keep others employed) left the salon of the ministry of foreign affairs, then situated in the rue du Bac, and went apart into a boudoir. These two men, of whom one is dead and the other has *one* foot in the grave, were, each in his own way, equally extraordinary. Both had been priests; both had abjured religion; both were married. One had been merely an Oratorian, the other had worn the mitre of a bishop. The first was named Fouché; I shall not tell you the name of the second;<sup>1</sup> both were then mere simple citizens — with very little simplicity. When they were seen to leave the salon and enter the boudoir, the rest of the company present showed a certain curiosity. A third person followed them, — a man who thought himself far stronger than the other two. His name was Sièyes, and you all know that he too had been a priest before the Revolution. The one who *walked with difficulty* was then the minister of foreign affairs; Fouché was minister of police; Sièyes had resigned the consulate.

“A small man, cold and stern in appearance, left his seat and followed the three others, saying aloud in

<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand was still living when de Marsay related these circumstances.

the hearing of the person from whom I have the information, 'I mistrust the gambling of priests.' This man was Carnot, minister of war. His remark did not trouble the two consuls who were playing cards in the salon. Cambacérès and Lebrun were then at the mercy of their ministers, men who were infinitely stronger than they.

"Nearly all these statesmen are dead, and no secrecy is due to them. They belong to history; and the history of that night and its consequences has been terrible. I tell it to you now because I alone know it; because Louis XVIII. never revealed the truth to that poor Madame de Cinq-Cygne; and because the present government which I serve is wholly indifferent as to whether that truth be known to the world or not.

"All four of these personages sat down in the boudoir. The lame man undoubtedly closed the door before a word was said; it is even thought that he ran the bolt. It is only persons of high rank who pay attention to such trifles. The three priests had the livid, impassible faces which you all remember. Carnot alone was ruddy. He was the first to speak. 'What is the point to be discussed?' he asked. 'France,' must have been the answer of the Prince (whom I admire as one of the most extraordinary men of our time). 'The Republic,' undoubtedly said Fouché. 'Power' probably said Sièyes."

All present looked at each other. With voice, look, and gesture de Marsay had wonderfully represented the three men.

“The three priests fully understood one another,” he continued, resuming his narrative. “Carnot no doubt looked at his colleagues and the ex-consul in a dignified manner. He must, however, have felt bewildered in his own mind.

“‘Do you believe in the success of the army?’ Sièyes said to him.

“‘We may expect everything from Bonaparte,’ replied the minister of war; ‘he has crossed the Alps.’

“‘At this moment,’ said the minister of foreign affairs, with deliberate slowness, ‘he is playing his last stake.’

“‘Come, let’s speak out,’ said Fouché; ‘what shall we do if the First Consul is defeated? Is it possible to collect another army? Must we continue his humble servants?’

“‘There is no republic now,’ remarked Sièyes; ‘Bonaparte is consul for ten years.’

“‘He has more power than ever Cromwell had,’ said the former bishop, ‘and he did not vote for the death of the king.’

“‘We have a master,’ said Fouché; ‘the question is, shall we continue to keep him if he loses the battle or shall we return to a pure republic?’



“ ‘France,’ replied Carnot, sententiously, ‘ cannot resist except she reverts to the old Conventional *energy*.’

“ ‘ I agree with Carnot,’ said Sièyes; ‘ if Bonaparte returns defeated we must put an end to him; he has let us know him too well during the last seven months.’

“ ‘ The army is for him,’ remarked Carnot, thoughtfully.

“ ‘ And the people for us!’ cried Fouché.

“ ‘ You go fast, monsieur,’ said the Prince, in that deep bass voice which he still preserves and which now drove Fouché back into himself.

“ ‘ Be frank,’ said a voice, as a former Conventional rose from a corner of the boudoir and showed himself; ‘ if Bonaparte returns a victor, we shall adore him; if vanquished, we’ll bury him!’

“ ‘ So you were there, Malin, were you?’ said the Prince, without betraying the least feeling. ‘ Then you must be one of us; sit down;’ and he made him a sign to be seated.

“ It is to this one circumstance that Malin, a Conventional of small repute, owes the position he afterwards obtained and, ultimately, that in which we see him at the present moment. He proved discreet, and the ministers were faithful to him; but they made him the pivot of the machine and the cat’s-paw of the machination. To return to my tale.

“ ‘ Bonaparte has never yet been vanquished,’ cried

Carnot, in a tone of conviction, ‘and he has just surpassed Hannibal.’

“ ‘If the worst happens, here is the Directory,’ said Sièyes, artfully, indicating with a wave of his hand the five persons present.

“ ‘And,’ added the Prince, ‘we are all committed to the maintenance of the French republic; we three priests have literally unfrocked ourselves; the general, here, voted for the death of the king; and you,’ he said, turning to Malin, ‘have got possession of the property of *émigrés*.’

“ ‘Yes, we have all the same interests,’ said Sièyes, dictatorially, ‘and our interests are one with those of the nation.’

“ ‘A rare thing,’ said the Prince, smiling.

“ ‘We must act,’ interrupted Fouché. ‘In all probability the battle is now going on; the Austrians outnumber us; Genoa has surrendered; Masséna has committed the great mistake of embarking for Antibes; it is very doubtful if he can rejoin Bonaparte, who will then be reduced to his own resources.’

“ ‘Who gave you that news?’ asked Carnot.

“ ‘It is sure,’ replied Fouché. ‘You will have the courier when the Bourse opens.’

“ ‘Those men did n’t mince their words,” said de Marsay, smiling, and stopping short for a moment.

“ ‘Remember,’ continued Fouché, ‘it is not when the

news of a disaster comes that we can organize clubs, rouse the patriotism of the people, and change the constitution. Our 18th Brumaire ought to be prepared beforehand.'

" 'Let us leave the care of that to the minister of police,' said the Prince, bowing to Fouché, 'and beware ourselves of Lucien.' (Lucien Bonaparte was then minister of the interior.)

" 'I'll arrest him,' said Fouché.

" 'Messieurs!' cried Sièyes, 'our Directory ought not to be subject to anarchical changes. We must organize a government of the few, a Senate for life, and an elective chamber the control of which shall be in our hands; for we ought to profit by the blunders of the past.'

" 'With such a system, there would be peace for me,' remarked the ex-bishop.

" 'Find me a sure man to negotiate with Moreau; for the Army of the Rhine will be our sole resource,' cried Carnot, who had been plunged in meditation.

" 'Ah!' said de Marsay, pausing, 'those men were right. They were grand in this crisis. I should have done as they did;' then he resumed his narrative.

" 'Messieurs!' cried Sièyes, in a grave and solemn tone.

" That word 'Messieurs!' was perfectly understood by all present; all eyes expressed the same faith, the

same promise, that of absolute silence, and unswerving loyalty to each other in case the First Consul returned triumphant.

“ ‘ We all know what we have to do,’ added Fouché.

“ Sièyes softly unbolted the door; his priestly ear had warned him. Lucien entered the room.

“ ‘ Good news!’ he said. ‘ A courier has just brought Madame Bonaparte a line from the First Consul. The campaign has opened with a victory at Montebello.’

The three ministers exchanged looks.

“ ‘ Was it a general engagement?’ asked Carnot.

“ ‘ No, a fight, in which Lannes has covered himself with glory. The affair was bloody. Attacked with ten thousand men by eighteen thousand, he was only saved by a division sent to his support. Ott is in full retreat. The Austrian line is broken.’

“ ‘ When did the fight take place?’ asked Carnot.

“ ‘ On the 8th,’ replied Lucien.

“ ‘ And this is the 13th,’ said the sagacious minister. ‘ Well, if that is so, the destinies of France are in the scale at the very moment we are speaking.’ ”

(In fact, the battle of Marengo did begin at dawn of the 14th.)

“ ‘ Four days of fatal uncertainty!’ said Lucien.

“ ‘ Fatal?’ said the minister of foreign affairs, coldly and interrogatively.

“ ‘ Four days,’ echoed Fouché.

“An eye-witness told me,” said de Marsay, continuing the narrative in his own person, “that the consuls, Cambacérès and Lebrun, knew nothing of this momentous news until after the six personages returned to the salon. It was then four in the morning. Fouché left first. That man of dark and mysterious genius, extraordinary, profound, and little understood, but who undoubtedly had the gifts of a Philip the Second, a Tiberius and a Borgia, went at once to work with an infernal and secret activity. His conduct at the time of the affair at Walcheren was that of a consummate soldier, a great politician, a far-seeing administrator. He was the only real minister that Napoleon ever had. And you all know how he then alarmed him.”

“Fouché, Masséna and the Prince,” continued de Marsay, reflectively, are the three greatest men, the wisest heads in diplomacy, war, and government, that I have ever known. If Napoleon had frankly allied them with his work there would no longer be a Europe, only a vast French Empire. Fouché did not finally detach himself from Napoleon until he saw Sièyes and the Prince de Talleyrand shoved aside.

“He now went to work, and in three days (all the while hiding the hand that stirred the ashes of the Montagne) he had organized that general agitation which then arose all over France and revived the republicanism of 1793. As it is necessary that I should explain this

obscure corner of our history, I must tell you that this agitation, starting from Fouché's own hand (which held the wires of the former Montagne), produced republican plots against the life of the First Consul, which was in peril from this cause long after the victory of Marengo. It was Fouché's sense of the evil he had thus brought about which led him to warn Napoleon, who held a contrary opinion, that republicans were more concerned than royalists in the various conspiracies.

“ Fouché was an admirable judge of men ; he relied on Sièyes because of his thwarted ambition, on Talleyrand because he was a great *seigneur*, on Carnot for his perfect honesty ; but the man he dreaded was the one whom you have seen here this evening. I will now tell how he entangled that man in his meshes.

“ Malin was only Malin in those days, — a secret agent and correspondent of Louis XVIII. Fouché now compelled him to reduce to writing all the proclamations of the proposed revolutionary government, its warrants and edicts against the factions of the 18th Brumaire. An accomplice against his own will, Malin was required to have these documents secretly printed, and the copies held ready in his own house for distribution if Bonaparte were defeated. The printer was subsequently imprisoned and detained two months ; he died in 1816, and always believed he had been employed by a Montagnard conspiracy.

“One of the most singular scenes ever played by Fouché’s police was caused by the blunder of an agent, who despatched a courier to a famous banker of that day with the news of a defeat at Marengo. Victory, you will remember, did not declare itself for Napoleon until seven o’clock in the evening of the battle. At midday the banker’s agent, considering the day lost and the French army about to be annihilated, hastened to despatch the courier. On receipt of that news Fouché was about to put in motion a whole army of bill-posters and criers, with a truck full of proclamations, when the second courier arrived with the news of the triumph which put all France beside itself with joy. There were heavy losses at the Bourse, of course. But the criers and posters who were gathered to announce the political death of Bonaparte and to post up the new proclamations were only kept waiting awhile till the news of the victory could be struck off!

“Malin, on whom the whole responsibility of the plot of which he had been the working agent was likely to fall if it ever became known, was so terrified that he packed the proclamations and other papers in carts and took them down to Gondreville in the night-time, where no doubt they were hidden in the cellars of that château, which he had bought in the name of another man — who was it, by the bye? he had him made chief-justice of an Imperial court — Ah! Marion. Having thus

disposed of these damning proofs he returned to Paris to congratulate the First Consul on his victory. Napoleon, as you know, rushed from Italy to Paris after the battle of Marengo with alarming celerity. Those who know the secret history of that time are well aware that a message from Lucien brought him back. The minister of the interior had foreseen the attitude of the Montagnard party, and though he had no idea of the quarter from which the wind really blew, he feared a storm. Incapable of suspecting the three ministers and Carnot, he attributed the movement which stirred all France to the hatred his brother had excited by the 18th Brumaire, and to the confident belief of the men of 1793 that defeat was certain in Italy.

“ The battle of Marengo detained Napoleon on the plains of Lombardy until the 25th of June, but he reached Paris on the 2d of July. Imagine the faces of the five conspirators as they met the First Consul at the Tuileries, and congratulated him on the victory. Fouché on that very occasion at the palace told Malin to have patience, for *all was not over yet*. The truth was, Talleyrand and Fouché both held that Bonaparte was not as much bound to the principles of the Revolution as they were, and as he ought to be; and for this reason, as well as for their own safety, they subsequently, in 1804, buckled him irrevocably, as they believed, to its cause by the affair of the Duc d’Enghien.

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The execution of that prince is connected by a series of discoverable ramifications with the plot which was laid on that June evening in the boudoir of the ministry of foreign affairs, the night before the battle of Marengo. Those who have the means of judging, and who have known persons who were well-informed, are fully aware that Bonaparte was handled like a child by Talleyrand and Fouché, who were determined to alienate him irrevocably from the House of Bourbon, whose agents were even then, at the last moment, endeavoring to negotiate with the First Consul."

"Talleyrand was playing whist in the salon of Madame de Luynes," said a personage who had been listening attentively to de Marsay's narrative. "It was about three o'clock in the morning, when he pulled out his watch, looked at it, stopped the game, and asked his three companions abruptly and without any preface whether the Prince de Condé had any other child than the Duc d'Enghien. Such an absurd inquiry from the lips of Talleyrand caused the utmost surprise. 'Why do you ask us what you know perfectly well yourself?' they said to him. 'Only to let you know that the House of Condé comes to an end at this moment.' Now Monsieur de Talleyrand had been at the hôtel de Luynes the entire evening, and he must have known that Bonaparte was absolutely unable to grant the pardon."

“But,” said Eugène de Rastignac, “I don’t see in all this any connection with Madame de Cinq-Cygne and her troubles.”

“Ah, you were so young at that time, my dear fellow; I forgot to explain the conclusion. You all know the affair of the abduction of the Comte de Gondreville, then senator of the Empire, for which the Simeuse brothers and the two d’Hauteserres were condemned to the galleys, — an affair which did, in fact, lead to their death.”

De Marsay, entreated by several persons present to whom the circumstances were unknown, related the whole trial, stating that the mysterious abductors were five sharks of the secret service of the ministry of the police, who were ordered to obtain the proclamations of the would-be Directory which Malin had surreptitiously taken from his house in Paris, and which he had himself come to Gondreville for the express purpose of destroying, being convinced at last that the Empire was on a sure foundation and could not be overthrown. “I have no doubt,” added de Marsay, “that Fouché took the opportunity to have the house searched for the correspondence between Malin and Louis XVIII., which was always kept up, even during the Terror. But in this cruel affair there was a private element, a passion of revenge in the mind of the leader of the party, a man named Corentin, who is still living, and who is one of

those subaltern agents whom nothing can replace and who makes himself felt by his amazing ability. It appears that Madame, then Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, had ill-treated him on a former occasion when he attempted to arrest the Simeuse brothers. What happened afterwards in connection with the senator's abduction was the result of his private vengeance.

“These facts were known of course, to Malin, and through him to Louis XVIII. You may therefore,” added de Marsay, turning to the Princesse de Cadignan, “explain the whole matter to the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, and show her why Louis XVIII. thought fit to keep silence.”



AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR.



*“When well beyond the horizontal rays of light  
thrown across the pavement, she turned abruptly  
and saw a human form looming through the fog.”*









## AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR.

ON the 22d of January, 1793, towards eight o'clock in the evening, an old gentlewoman came down the sharp declivity of the Faubourg Saint-Martin, which ends near the church of Saint-Laurent in Paris. Snow had fallen throughout the day, so that footfalls could be scarcely heard. The streets were deserted. The natural fear inspired by such stillness was deepened by the terror to which all France was then a prey.

The old lady had met no one. Her failing sight hindered her from perceiving in the distance a few pedestrians, sparsely scattered like shadows, along the broad road of the faubourg. She was walking bravely through the solitude as if her age were a talisman to guard her from danger; but after passing the Rue des Morts she fancied that she heard the firm, heavy tread of a man coming behind her. The thought seized her mind that she had been listening to it unconsciously for some time. Terrified at the idea of being followed, she tried to walk faster to reach a lighted shop-window, and settle the doubt which thus assailed her. When well beyond the horizontal rays of light thrown across the pavement, she turned abruptly and saw a human form looming through the fog. The indistinct glimpse was enough. She staggered for an instant under the weight of terror, for she no longer doubted that this unknown man had tracked

her, step by step, from her home. The hope of escaping such a spy lent strength to her feeble limbs. Incapable of reasoning, she quickened her steps to a run, as if it were possible to escape a man necessarily more agile than she. After running for a few minutes, she reached the shop of a pastry-cook, entered it, and fell, rather than sat, down on a chair which stood before the counter.

As she lifted the creaking latch of the door, a young woman, who was at work on a piece of embroidery, looked up and recognized through the glass panes the antiquated mantle of purple silk which wrapped the old lady, and hastened to pull open a drawer, as if to take from thence something that she had to give her. The action and the expression of the young woman not only implied a wish to get rid of the stranger, as of some one most unwelcome, but she let fall an exclamation of impatience at finding the drawer empty. Then, without looking at the lady, she came rapidly from behind the counter, and went towards the back-shop to call her husband, who appeared at once.

“Where have you put —— ——?” she asked him, mysteriously, calling his attention to the old lady by a glance, and not concluding her sentence.

Although the pastry-cook could see nothing but the enormous black silk hood circled with purple ribbons which the stranger wore, he disappeared, with a glance at his wife which seemed to say, “Do you suppose I should leave *that* on your counter?”

Surprised at the silence and immobility of her customer the wife came forward, and was seized with a sudden movement of compassion as well as of curiosity

when she looked at her. Though the complexion of the old gentlewoman was naturally livid, like that of a person vowed to secret austerities, it was easy to see that some recent alarm had spread an unusual paleness over her features. Her head-covering was so arranged as to hide the hair, whitened no doubt by age, for the cleanly collar of her dress proved that she wore no powder. The concealment of this natural adornment gave to her countenance a sort of conventual severity; but its features were grave and noble. In former days the habits and manners of people of quality were so different from those of all other classes that it was easy to distinguish persons of noble birth. The young shopwoman felt certain, therefore, that the stranger was a *ci-devant*, and one who had probably belonged to the Court.

“Madame?” she said with involuntary respect, forgetting that the title was proscribed.

The old lady made no answer. Her eyes were fixed on the glass of the shop-window, as if some alarming object were painted upon it.

“What is the matter, *citoyenne*?” asked the master of the establishment re-entering, and drawing the attention of his customer to a little cardboard box covered with blue paper, which he held out to her.

“It is nothing, nothing, my friends,” she answered in a gentle voice, as she raised her eyes to give the man a thankful look. Seeing a phrygian cap upon his head, a cry escaped her: “Ah! it is you who have betrayed me!”

The young woman and her husband replied by a deprecating gesture of horror which caused the unknown

lady to blush, either for her harsh suspicion or from the relief of feeling it unjust.

"Excuse me," she said with childlike sweetness. Then taking a gold *louis* from her pocket she offered it to the pastry-cook. "Here is the sum we agreed upon," she added.

There is a poverty which poor people quickly divine. The shopkeeper and his wife looked at each other with a glance at the old lady that conveyed a mutual thought. The *louis* was doubtless her last. The hands of the poor woman trembled as she offered it, and her eyes rested upon it sadly, yet not with avarice. She seemed to feel the full extent of her sacrifice. Hunger and want were traced upon her features in lines as legible as those of timidity and ascetic habits. Her clothing showed vestiges of luxury. It was of silk, well-worn; the mantle was clean, though faded; the laces carefully darned; in short, here were the rags of opulence. The two shopkeepers, divided between pity and self-interest, began to soothe their conscience with words: —

"*Citoyenne*, you seem very feeble —"

"Would Madame like to take something?" asked the wife, cutting short her husband's speech.

"We have some very good broth," he added.

"It is so cold, perhaps Madame is chilled by her walk; but you can rest here and warm yourself."

"The devil is not so black as he is painted," cried the husband.

Won by the kind tone of these words, the old lady admitted that she had been followed by a man and was afraid of going home alone.

"Is that all?" said the man with the phrygian cap.  
"Wait for me, *citoyenne*."

He gave the *louis* to his wife. Then, moved by a species of gratitude which slips into the shopkeeping soul when its owner receives an exorbitant price for an article of little value, he went to put on his uniform as a National guard, took his hat, slung on his sabre, and reappeared under arms. But the wife meantime had reflected. Reflection, as often happens in many hearts, had closed the open hand of her benevolence. Uneasy, and alarmed lest her husband should be mixed up in some dangerous affair, she pulled him by the flap of his coat, intending to stop him; but the worthy man, obeying the impulse of charity, promptly offered to escort the poor lady to her home.

"It seems that the man who has given her this fright is prowling outside," said his wife nervously.

"I am afraid he is," said the old lady, with much simplicity.

"Suppose he should be a spy. Perhaps it is a conspiracy. Don't go. Take back the box." These words, whispered in the pastry-cook's ear by the wife of his bosom, chilled the sudden compassion that had warmed him.

"Well, well, I will just say two words to the man and get rid of him," he said, opening the door and hurrying out.

The old gentlewoman, passive as a child and half paralyzed with fear, sat down again. The shopkeeper almost instantly reappeared; but his face, red by nature and still further scorched by the fires of his bakery, had suddenly turned pale, and he was in the grasp of such

terror that his legs shook and his eyes were like those of a drunken man.

“ Miserable aristocrat ! ” he cried, furiously, “ do you want to cut off our heads ? Go out from here ; let me see your heels, and don’t dare to come back ; don’t expect me to supply you with the means of conspiracy ! ”

So saying, the pastry-cook endeavored to get back the little box which the old lady had already slipped into one of her pockets. Hardly had the bold hands of the shopkeeper touched her clothing, than, preferring to encounter danger with no protection but that of God rather than lose the thing she had come to buy, she recovered the agility of youth, and sprang to the door, through which she disappeared abruptly, leaving the husband and wife amazed and trembling.

As soon as the poor lady found herself alone in the street she began to walk rapidly ; but her strength soon gave way, for she once more heard the snow creaking under the footsteps of the spy as he trod heavily upon it. She was obliged to stop short : the man stopped also. She dared not speak to him, nor even look at him ; either because of her terror, or from some lack of natural intelligence. Presently she continued her walk slowly ; the man measured his step by hers, and kept at the same distance behind her ; he seemed to move like her shadow. Nine o’clock struck as the silent couple repassed the church of Saint-Laurent. It is the nature of all souls, even the weakest, to fall back into quietude after moments of violent agitation ; for manifold as our feelings may be, our bodily powers are limited. Thus the old lady, receiving no injury from her apparent persecutor, began to think that he might be a secret friend watching



to protect her. She gathered up in her mind the circumstances attending other apparitions of the mysterious stranger as if to find plausible grounds for this consoling opinion, and took pleasure in crediting him with good rather than sinister intentions. Forgetting the terror he had inspired in the pastry-cook, she walked on with a firmer step towards the upper part of the Faubourg Saint-Martin.

At the end of half an hour she reached a house standing close to the junction of the chief street of the faubourg with the street leading out to the Barrière de Pantin. The place is to this day one of the loneliest in Paris. The north wind blowing from Belleville and the Buttes Chaumont whistled among the houses, or rather cottages, scattered through the sparsely inhabited little valley, where the enclosures are fenced with walls built of mud and refuse bones. This dismal region seems the natural home of poverty and despair. The man who was intent on following the poor creature who had had the courage to thread these dark and silent streets seemed struck with the spectacle they offered. He stopped as if reflecting, and stood in a hesitating attitude, dimly visible by a street lantern whose flickering light scarcely pierced the fog. Fear gave eyes to the old gentlewoman, who now fancied that she saw something sinister in the features of this unknown man. All her terrors revived, and profiting by the curious hesitation that had seized him, she glided like a shadow to the doorway of the solitary dwelling, touched a spring, and disappeared with phantasmagoric rapidity.

The man, standing motionless, gazed at the house which was, as it were, a type of the wretched buildings

of the neighborhood. The tottering hovel, built of porous stone in rough blocks, was coated with yellow plaster much cracked, and looked ready to fall before a gust of wind. The roof, of brown tiles covered with moss, had sunk in several places, and gave the impression that the weight of snow might break it down at any moment. Each storey had three windows whose frames, rotted by dampness and shrunk by the heat of the sun, told that the outer cold penetrated to the chambers. The lonely house seemed like an ancient tower that time had forgotten to destroy. A faint light gleamed from the garret windows, which were irregularly cut in the roof; but the rest of the house was in complete obscurity. The old woman went up the rough and clumsy stairs with difficulty, holding fast to a rope which took the place of baluster. She knocked furtively at the door of a lodging under the roof, and sat hastily down on a chair which an old man offered her as she entered.

“Hide! hide yourself!” she cried. “Though we go out so seldom our errands are known, our steps are watched —”

“What has happened?” asked another old woman sitting near the fire.

“The man who has hung about the house since yesterday followed me to-night.”

At these words the occupants of the hovel looked at each other with terror in their faces. The old man was the least moved of the three, possibly because he was the one in greatest danger. Under the pressure of misfortune or the yoke of persecution a man of courage begins, as it were, by preparing for the sacrifice of

himself: he looks upon his days as so many victories won from fate. The eyes of the two women, fixed upon the old man, showed plainly that he alone was the object of their extreme anxiety.

"Why distrust God, my sisters?" he said, in a hollow but impressive voice. "We chanted praises to his name amid the cries of victims and assassins at the convent. If it pleased him to save me from that butchery, it was doubtless for some destiny which I shall accept without a murmur. God protects his own, and disposes of them according to his will. It is of you, not of me, that we should think."

"No," said one of the women; "what is our life in comparison with that of a priest?"

"Ever since the day when I found myself outside of the Abbaye des Chelles," said the nun beside the fire, "I have given myself up for dead."

"Here," said the one who had just come in, holding out the little box to the priest, "here are the sacramental wafers — Listen!" she cried, interrupting herself. "I hear some one on the stairs."

At these words all three listened intently. The noise ceased.

"Do not be frightened," said the priest, "even if some one asks to enter. A person on whose fidelity we can safely rely has taken measures to cross the frontier, and he will soon call here for letters which I have written to the Duc de Langeais and the Marquis de Beauséant advising them as to the measures they must take to get you out of this dreadful country and save you from the misery or the death you would otherwise undergo here."

"Shall you not follow us?" said the two nuns softly, but in a tone of despair.

"My place is near the victims," said the priest, simply.

The nuns were silent, looking at him with devout admiration.

"Sister Martha," he said, addressing the nun who had fetched the wafers, "this messenger must answer '*Fiat voluntas*' to the word '*Hosanna*.'"

"There is some one on the stairway," exclaimed the other nun, hastily opening a hiding-place burrowed at the edge of the roof.

This time it was easy to hear the steps of a man sounding through the deep silence on the rough stairs, which were caked with patches of hardened mud. The priest slid with difficulty into a narrow hiding-place, and the nuns hastily threw articles of apparel over him.

"You can shut me in, Sister Agatha," he said, in a smothered voice.

He was scarcely hidden when three knocks upon the door made the sisters tremble and consult each other with their eyes, for they dared not speak. Forty years' separation from the world had made them like plants of a hot-house which wilt when brought into the outer air. Accustomed to the life of a convent, they could not conceive of any other, and when, one morning, their bars and gratings were flung down they had shuddered at finding themselves free. It is easy to imagine the species of imbecility which the events of the Revolution, enacted before their eyes, had produced in these innocent souls. Quite incapable of harmonizing their conventual ideas with the exigencies of ordinary life,

not even comprehending their own situation, they were like children who had always been cared for, and who now, torn from their maternal providence, had taken to prayers as other children take to tears. So it happened that in presence of immediate danger they were dumb and passive, and could think of no other defence than Christian resignation.

The man who sought to enter interpreted their silence as he pleased ; he suddenly opened the door and showed himself. The two nuns trembled when they recognized the individual who for some days had watched the house and seemed to make inquiries about its inmates. They stood quite still and looked at him with uneasy curiosity, like the children of savages examining a being of another sphere. The stranger was very tall and stout, but nothing in his manner or appearance denoted that he was a bad man. He copied the immobility of the sisters and stood motionless, letting his eye rove slowly round the room.

Two bundles of straw placed on two planks served as beds for the nuns. A table was in the middle of the room ; upon it a copper candlestick, a few plates, three knives, and a round loaf of bread. The fire on the hearth was very low, and a few sticks of wood piled in a corner of the room testified to the poverty of the occupants. The walls, once covered with a coat of paint now much defaced, showed the wretched condition of the roof through which the rain had trickled, making a network of brown stains. A sacred relic, saved no doubt from the pillage of the Abbaye des Chelles, adorned the mantel-shelf of the chimney. Three chairs, two coffers, and a broken chest of drawers

completed the furniture of the room. A doorway cut near the fireplace showed there was probably an inner chamber.

The inventory of this poor cell was soon made by the individual who had presented himself under such alarming auspices. An expression of pity crossed his features, and as he threw a kind glance upon the frightened women he seemed as much embarrassed as they. The strange silence in which they all three stood and faced each other lasted but a moment, for the stranger seemed to guess the moral weakness and inexperience of the poor helpless creatures, and he said, in a voice which he strove to render gentle, —

“I have not come as an enemy, *citoyennes*.” Then he paused, but resumed: “My sisters, if harm should ever happen to you, be sure that I shall not have contributed to it. I have come to ask a favor of you.”

They still kept silence.

“If I ask too much — if I annoy you — I will go away; but, believe me, I am heartily devoted to you, and if there is any service that I could render you, you may employ me without fear. I, and I alone, perhaps, am above law — since there is no longer a king.”

The ring of truth in these words induced Sister Agatha, a nun belonging to the ducal house of Langeais, and whose manners indicated that she had once lived amid the festivities of life and breathed the air of courts, to point to a chair as if she asked their guest to be seated. The unknown gave vent to an expression of joy, mingled with melancholy, as he understood this gesture. He waited respectfully till the sisters were seated, and then obeyed it.

"You have given shelter," he said, "to a venerable priest not sworn in by the Republic, who escaped miraculously from the massacre at the Convent of the Carmelites."

"*Hosanna*," said Sister Agatha, suddenly interrupting the stranger, and looking at him with anxious curiosity.

"That is not his name, I think," he answered.

"But, Monsieur, we have no priest here," cried Sister Martha, hastily, "and —"

"Then you should take better precautions," said the unknown gently, stretching his arm to the table and picking up a breviary. "I do not think you understand Latin and —"

He stopped short, for the extreme distress painted on the faces of the poor nuns made him fear he had gone too far; they trembled violently, and their eyes filled with tears.

"Do not fear," he said; "I know the name of your guest, and yours also. During the last three days I have learned your poverty, and your great devotion to the venerable Abbé of —"

"Hush!" exclaimed Sister Agatha, ingenuously putting a finger on her lip.

"You see, my sisters, that if I had the horrible design of betraying you, I might have accomplished it again and again."

As he uttered these words the priest emerged from his prison and appeared in the middle of the room.

"I cannot believe, Monsieur," he said courteously, "that you are one of our persecutors. I trust you. What is it you desire of me?"

The saintly confidence of the old man and the nobility of mind imprinted on his countenance might have disarmed even an assassin. He who thus mysteriously agitated this home of penury and resignation stood contemplating the group before him ; then he addressed the priest in a trustful tone, with these words : —

“ My father, I came to ask you to celebrate a Mass for the repose of the soul — of — of a sacred being whose body can never lie in holy ground.”

The priest involuntarily shuddered. The nuns, not as yet understanding who it was of whom the unknown man had spoken, stood with their necks stretched and their faces turned towards the speakers, in an attitude of eager curiosity. The ecclesiastic looked intently at the stranger ; unequivocal anxiety was marked on every feature, and his eyes offered an earnest and even ardent prayer.

“ Yes,” said the priest at length. “ Return here at midnight and I shall be ready to celebrate the only funeral service that we are able to offer in expiation of the crime of which you speak.”

The unknown shivered ; a joy both sweet and solemn seemed to rise in his soul above some secret grief. Respectfully saluting the priest and the two saintly women, he disappeared with a mute gratitude which these generous souls knew well how to interpret.

Two hours later the stranger returned, knocked cautiously at the door of the garret, and was admitted by Mademoiselle de Langeais, who led him to the inner chamber of the humble refuge, where all was in readiness for the ceremony. Between two flues of the



chimney the nuns had placed the old chest of drawers, whose broken edges were concealed by a magnificent altar-cloth of green moiré. A large ebony and ivory crucifix hanging on the discolored wall stood out in strong relief from the surrounding bareness, and necessarily caught the eye. Four slender little tapers, which the sisters had contrived to fasten to the altar with sealing-wax, threw a pale glimmer dimly reflected by the yellow wall. These feeble rays scarcely lit up the rest of the chamber, but as their light fell upon the sacred objects it seemed a halo falling from heaven upon the bare and undecorated altar.

The floor was damp. The attic roof, which sloped sharply on both sides of the room, was full of chinks through which the wind penetrated. Nothing could be less stately, yet nothing was ever more solemn than this lugubrious ceremony. Silence so deep that some far-distant cry could have pierced it, lent a sombre majesty to the nocturnal scene. The grandeur of the occasion contrasted vividly with the poverty of its circumstances, and roused a feeling of religious terror. On either side of the altar the old nuns, kneeling on the tiled floor and taking no thought of its mortal dampness, were praying in concert with the priest, who, robed in his pontifical vestments, placed upon the altar a golden chalice incrustated with precious stones, — a sacred vessel rescued, no doubt, from the pillage of the Abbaye des Chelles. Close to this vase, which was a gift of royal munificence, the bread and wine of the consecrated sacrifice were contained in two glass tumblers scarcely worthy of the meanest tavern. In default of a missal the priest had placed his breviary

on a corner of the altar. A common earthenware platter was provided for the washing of those innocent hands, pure and unspotted with blood. All was majestic and yet paltry ; poor but noble ; profane and holy in one.

The unknown man knelt piously between the sisters. Suddenly, as he caught sight of the crape upon the chalice and the crucifix, — for in default of other means of proclaiming the object of this funeral rite the priest had put God himself into mourning, — the mysterious visitant was seized by some all-powerful recollection, and drops of sweat gathered on his brow. The four silent actors in this scene looked at each other with mysterious sympathy ; their souls, acting one upon another, communicated to each the feelings of all, blending them into the one emotion of religious pity. It seemed as though their thought had evoked from the dead the sacred martyr whose body was devoured by quicklime, but whose shade rose up before them in royal majesty. They were celebrating a funeral Mass without the remains of the deceased. Beneath these rafters and disjointed laths four Christian souls were interceding with God for a king of France, and making his burial without a coffin. It was the purest of all devotions ; an act of wonderful loyalty accomplished without one thought of self. Doubtless in the eyes of God it was the cup of cold water that weighed in the balance against many virtues. The whole of monarchy was there in the prayers of the priest and the two poor women ; but also it may have been that the Revolution was present likewise in the person of the strange being whose face betrayed the remorse that led him to make this solemn offering of a vast repentance.

Instead of pronouncing the Latin words, *Introibo ad altare Dei*, etc., the priest, with divine intuition, glanced at his three assistants, who represented all Christian France, and said, in words which effaced the penury and meanness of the hovel, — “We enter now into the sanctuary of God.”

At these words, uttered with penetrating unction, a solemn awe seized the participants. Beneath the dome of Saint Peter’s in Rome God had never seemed more majestic to man than he did now in this refuge of poverty and to the eyes of these Christians, — so true is it that between man and God all mediation is unneeded, for his glory descends from Himself alone. The fervent piety of the nameless man was unfeigned, and the feeling that held these four servants of God and the king was unanimous. The sacred words echoed like celestial music amid the silence. There was a moment when the unknown broke down and wept: it was at the *Pater Noster*, to which the priest added a Latin clause which the stranger doubtless comprehended and applied, — *Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse* (“And forgive the regicides even as Louis XVI. himself forgave them”). The two nuns saw the tears coursing down the manly cheeks of their visitant, and dropping fast on the tiled floor.

The Office of the Dead was recited. The *Domine salvum fac regem*, sung in low tones, touched the hearts of these faithful royalists as they thought of the infant king, now captive in the hands of his enemies, for whom this prayer was offered. The unknown shuddered; perhaps he feared an impending crime in which he would be called to take an unwilling part.

When the service was over, the priest made a sign to the nuns, who withdrew to the outer room. As soon as he was alone with the unknown, the old man went up to him with gentle sadness of manner, and said in the tone of a father, —

“My son, if you have steeped your hands in the blood of the martyr king confess yourself to me. There is no crime which, in the eyes of God, is not washed out by a repentance as deep and sincere as yours appears to be.”

At the first words of the ecclesiastic an involuntary motion of terror escaped the stranger; but he quickly recovered himself, and looked at the astonished priest with calm assurance.

“My father,” he said, in a voice that nevertheless trembled, “no one is more innocent than I of the blood shed —”

“I believe it!” said the priest.

He paused a moment, during which he examined afresh his penitent; then, persisting in the belief that he was one of those timid members of the Assembly who sacrificed the inviolate and sacred head to save their own, he resumed in a grave voice: —

“Reflect, my son, that something more than taking no part in that great crime is needed to absolve from guilt. Those who kept their sword in the scabbard when they might have defended their king have a heavy account to render to the King of kings. Oh, yes,” added the venerable man, moving his head from right to left with an expressive motion; “yes, heavy, indeed! for, standing idle, they made themselves the accomplices of a horrible transgression.”

“Do you believe,” asked the stranger, in a surprised tone, “that even an indirect participation will be punished? The soldier ordered to form the line, — do you think that he was guilty?”

The priest hesitated. Glad of the dilemma that placed this puritan of royalty between the dogma of passive obedience, which according to the partisans of monarchy should dominate the military system, and the other dogma, equally imperative, which consecrates the person of the king, the stranger hastened to accept the hesitation of the priest as a solution of the doubts that seemed to trouble him. Then, so as not to allow the old Jansenist time for further reflection, he said quickly, —

“I should blush to offer you any fee whatever in acknowledgment of the funeral service you have just celebrated for the repose of the king’s soul and for the discharge of my conscience. We can only pay for inestimable things by offerings which are likewise beyond all price. Deign to accept, Monsieur, the gift which I now make to you of a holy relic; the day may come when you will know its value.”

As he said these words he gave the ecclesiastic a little box of light weight. The priest took it as it were involuntarily, for the solemn tone in which the words were uttered and the awe with which the stranger held the box struck him with fresh amazement. They re-entered the outer room, where the two nuns were waiting for them.

“You are living,” said the unknown, “in a house whose owner, Mucius Scævola, the plasterer who lives on the first floor, is noted in the Section for his patriotism. He is, however, secretly attached to the Bourbons. He was formerly huntsman to Monseigneur the

Prince de Conti, to whom he owes everything. As long as you stay in this house you are in greater safety than you can be in any other part of France. Remain here. Pious souls will watch over you and supply your wants; and you can await without danger the coming of better days. A year hence, on the 21st of January" (as he uttered these last words he could not repress an involuntary shudder), "I shall return to celebrate once more the Mass of expiation —"

He could not end the sentence. Bowing to the silent occupants of the garret, he cast a last look upon the signs of their poverty and disappeared.

To the two simple-minded women this event had all the interest of romance. As soon as the venerable abbé told them of the mysterious gift so solemnly offered by the stranger they placed the box upon the table, and the three anxious faces, faintly lighted by a tallow-candle, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box and took from it a handkerchief of extreme fineness, stained with sweat. As she unfolded it they saw dark stains.

"That is blood!" exclaimed the priest.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" cried the other nun.

The sisters let fall the precious relic with gestures of horror. To these ingenuous souls the mystery that wrapped their unknown visitor became inexplicable, and the priest from that day forth forbade himself to search for its solution.

The three prisoners soon perceived that, in spite of the Terror, a powerful arm was stretched over them.

First, they received firewood and provisions ; next, the sisters guessed that a woman was associated with their protector, for linen and clothing came to them mysteriously, and enabled them to go out without danger of observation from the aristocratic fashion of the only garments they had been able to secure ; finally, Mucius Scævola brought them certificates of citizenship. Advice as to the necessary means of insuring the safety of the venerable priest often came to them from unexpected quarters, and proved so singularly opportune that it was quite evident it could only have been given by some one in possession of state secrets. In spite of the famine which then afflicted Paris, they found daily at the door of their hovel rations of white bread, laid there by invisible hands. They thought they recognized in Mucius Scævola the agent of these mysterious benefactions, which were always timely and intelligent ; but the noble occupants of the poor garret had no doubt whatever that the unknown individual who had celebrated the midnight Mass on the 22d of January, 1793, was their secret protector. They added to their daily prayers a special prayer for him ; night and day these pious hearts made supplication for his happiness, his prosperity, his redemption. They prayed that God would keep his feet from snares and save him from his enemies, and grant him a long and peaceful life.

Their gratitude, renewed as it were daily, was necessarily mingled with curiosity that grew keener day by day. The circumstances attending the appearance of the stranger were a ceaseless topic of conversation and of endless conjecture, and soon became a benefit of a special kind, from the occupation and distraction of

mind which was thus produced. They resolved that the stranger should not be allowed to escape the expression of their gratitude when he came to commemorate the next sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI.

That night, so impatiently awaited, came at length. At midnight the heavy steps resounded up the wooden stairway. The room was prepared for the service; the altar was dressed. This time the sisters opened the door and hastened to light the entrance. Mademoiselle de Langeais even went down a few stairs that she might catch the first glimpse of their benefactor.

"Come!" she said, in a trembling and affectionate voice. "Come, you are expected!"

The man raised his head, gave the nun a gloomy look, and made no answer. She felt as though an icy garment had fallen upon her, and she kept silence. At his aspect gratitude and curiosity died within their hearts. He may have been less cold, less taciturn, less terrible than he seemed to these poor souls, whose own emotions led them to expect a flow of friendship from his. They saw that this mysterious being was resolved to remain a stranger to them, and they acquiesced with resignation. But the priest fancied he saw a smile, quickly repressed, upon the stranger's lip as he saw the preparations made to receive him. He heard the Mass and prayed, but immediately disappeared, refusing in a few courteous words the invitation given by Mademoiselle de Langeais to remain and partake of the humble collation they had prepared for him.

After the 9th Thermidor the nuns and the Abbé de Marolles were able to go about Paris without incurring



any danger. The first visit of the old priest was to a perfumery at the sign of the "Queen of Flowers," kept by the citizen and *citoyenne* Ragon, formerly perfumers to the Court, well known for their faithfulness to the royal family, and employed by the Vendéens as a channel of communication with the princes and royal committees in Paris. The abbé, dressed as the times required, was leaving the doorstep of the shop, situated between the church of Saint-Roch and the Rue des Fondeurs, when a great crowd coming down the Rue Saint-Honoré hindered him from advancing.

"What is it?" he asked of Madame Ragon.

"Oh, nothing!" she answered. "It is the cart and the executioner going to the Place Louis XV. Ah, we saw enough of that last year! but now, four days after the anniversary of the 21st of January, we can look at the horrid procession without distress."

"Why so?" asked the abbé. "What you say is not Christian."

"But this is the execution of the accomplices of Robespierre. They have fought it off as long as they could, but now they are going in their turn where they have sent so many innocent people."

The crowd which filled the Rue Saint-Honoré passed on like a wave. Above the sea of heads the Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an impulse, saw, standing erect in the cart, the stranger who three days before had assisted for the second time in the Mass of commemoration.

"Who is that?" he asked; "the one standing —"

"That is the executioner," answered Monsieur Ragon, calling the man by his monarchical name.

“Help! help!” cried Madame Ragon. “Monsieur l’Abbé is fainting!”

She caught up a flask of vinegar and brought him quickly back to consciousness.

“He must have given me,” said the old priest, “the handkerchief with which the king wiped his brow as he went to his martyrdom. Poor man! that steel knife had a heart when all France had none!”

The perfumers thought the words of the priest were an effect of delirium.

THE END.











